

WILD WEST WEEKLY

A MAGAZINE CONTAINING STORIES. SKETCHES ETC. OF WESTERN LIFE.

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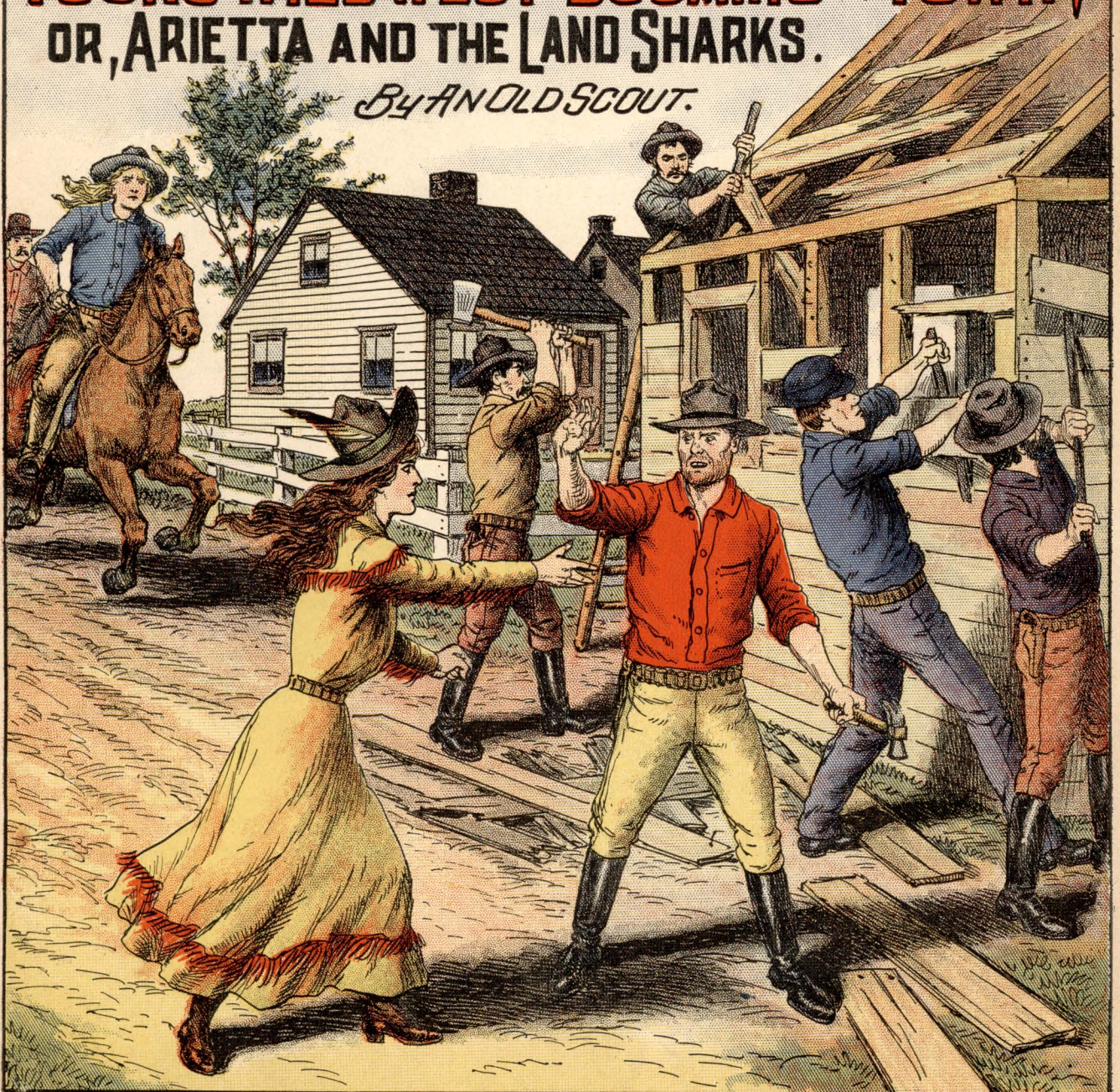
No. 346.

NEW YORK, JUNE 4, 1909.

Price 5 Cents.

YOUNG WILD WEST BOOMING A TOWN; OR, ARIETTA AND THE LAND SHARKS.

By AN OLD SCOUT.



The Land Sharks were making rapid progress at tearing down the shanty. Arietta saw Wild and his partners riding swiftly to the scene, and she ran from the camp and called out: "Stop that, you scoundrels! You have overstepped the line."

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Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1909, in the office of the Librarian of Congress, Washington, D. C., by Frank Tousey, Publisher, 24 Union Square, New York.

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YOUNG WILD WEST BOOMING A TOWN

—OR—

Arietta and the Land Sharks

BY AN OLD SCOUT.

CHAPTER I.

READY TO START THE RUSH.

When Young Wild West and his friends struck the little town of Grizzly Junction, New Mexico, one afternoon in late spring, a few years ago, they found it alive with people and everything on the "hustle."

It is hardly necessary for us to tell who Young Wild West was, for so much has been printed about him that about everyone who may be classed as a reader of stories of western adventure knows all about him.

But there are those who are just beginning to read fiction, as well as honest stories of adventure in which brave deeds are described, and wherein the hero and his friends do things that are calculated to stimulate the mind of the growing youth and teach him that it always pays to do right, no matter what the cost. To them we will say that Young Wild West, though but a boy in years, was, at the time of which we write, the acknowledged Champion Deadshot of the West, and commonly called the Prince of the Saddle, because of his remarkable feats and achievements on horseback.

His light chestnut hair had not been cut, since he was a child, save to be trimmed at the ends, and he having grown to be a man in size and strength, the long hair hanging over his shoulders gave him a dashing, not to say distinguished appearance.

Handsome of face and feature and graceful and athletic in form, there was no wonder that he should be loved and honored by those he called his friends.

But if the dashing young deadshot had friends, he surely had enemies, as well, for the evil-doer feared and hated him; and all because he had a way of suppressing vice and helping those in need of aid.

Added to his wonderful skill with a rifle or revolver, his courage, extreme coolness and ability to do the right thing at the right time, made him one who stood without a peer as the ideal boy hero.

His two partners, Cheyenne Charlie, an ex-Government scout and Indian fighter, and Jim Dart, a boy about the same age of Wild, as our hero was called, were typical Westerners—those who had experienced the bitter with the sweet in trying to help boom that part of the United States.

All three invariably wore buckskin hunting suits, trimmed rather elaborately with scarlet fringe, but when they were in a warm climate they seldom had on their coats, and then were picturesque in silk shirts of a bright color.

The girls of the party were Arietta Murdock—peerless Arietta, the sweetheart of Young Wild West; Anna, the wife of Cheyenne Charlie, and Eloise Gardner, the sweetheart of Jim Dart.

Of the three, Arietta was the real Western girl. She had been born and reared in Wyoming, and she had been taught when but a child to use firearms and ride and manage horses.

Since she had met the dashing young deadshot she had learned many of his ways, and one of them was to keep cool when danger threatened, and to use good judgment.

Anna and Eloise could hardly be expected to equal her in this respect, since they had not been in that part of the country but two or three years, and it had taken them some time to get used to the many dangers that were to be met with while riding over the mountains and plains, and camping out in the wilderness.

But they had learned to love the free, healthful life, and as we find them at the opening of our story they were the picture of health and happiness.

There were two servants of the party who must not be forgotten—one of them especially.

They were Wing Wah, the cook, and Hop Wah, his brother, who was called the handy man.

It was the latter that needs special mention, for he was surely a wonderful Chinaman.

Hop, though he looked to be as innocent and childish as any heathen that ever crossed the broad Pacific, was a professional card sharp, a magician, and was very fond of practical joking and whisky.

One Chinaman was enough to do the work for our friends, but Hop had drifted to them, and because of his numerous ways and his services in times when death threatened them he had really become a fixture to the party.

With this rather brief introduction we will proceed.

Young Wild West and his friends struck the place called Grizzly Junction more by accident than design.

They were simply riding about through the wildest parts of the country, in search of excitement and adventure when they sighted the town.

The fact that so many people of both sexes, and all ages, were gathered there, made them wonder what was going on.

They rode right up the sandy street, however, and many took more than ordinary notice of them, since their dashing and picturesque appearance was bound to attract attention.

The party halted as near as they could get to the building that had a sign across the top, indicating that it was the general store and postoffice, and then our hero nodded to a good-natured looking cowboy and said:

"What's going on here, stranger?"

"Why, ain't yer heard, young feller?" and the cowboy looked very much surprised.

"No; we happened to run across this town, and we thought we would stop. You've got a lot of people here, I reckon."

"I reckon so. There's a lot here now. But to-morrer mornin', a few minutes after nine, there won't be enough here ter start a poker game. Young feller, ther Comanche Strip opens to-morrer mornin', an' all them what wants ter git homestead plots fur nothin' must start from here at nine o'clock. Yer might as well come in on ther game, 'cause a few more don't make any difference. You've got ter be twenty-one, though, ter hold a plot of land, an' I s'pose that'll put ther most of yer out of ther game."

"Yes, that's right. Only two of us have got as far along in years as twenty-one. But that won't make any difference about us going along with the rush. We like excitement, and it seems to me that there ought to be lots of it in a game of this kind. We don't want any Government land, but we'll take part in the rush, just the same. And we'll help boom the new town, too."

"Good fur you, young feller! What might your name be? I sorter like ther looks of you folks, an' that's why I ask."

"Well, my name happens to be Young Wild West."

"What!" cried the cowboy, showing amazement. "You ain't Young Wild West, ther Champion Deadshot of ther West, are yer?"

"Well, I guess I am. But don't think that I call myself the Champion Deadshot, for I don't. Others have given that name to me, and all I have to do is to defend the title. But that don't matter. There are so many good shots in the West nowadays that it would be hard to tell who is the best. But say! You've certainly got a bunch of people here; and there seems to be all kinds, too."

"Yes, Young Wild West, there's everything here, from ther honest man, who has spent nigh onto his last dollar ter git here, to ther common pickpocket from ther cities. There's some of ther best people in ther whole country here, an' there's some of ther worst. It's kinder worth while ter stand off an' study 'em, I reckon."

As the cowboy said this he turned and beckoned to some of his friends, who had been watching him from the front of the saloon across the way.

They promptly came over.

There were five of them, and they were all cowboys.

"Boys, I want ter introduce yer to ther Champion Deadshot of ther West," he said, waving his hand toward the dashing young hero, who was sitting calmly on the back of his splendid sorrel stallion, Spitfire. "You've all heard tell of Young Wild West? Well, here he is."

The men looked surprised, but they quickly came up and put out their hands.

Wild smiled at them, for a single glance told him they were honest fellows, though rough in their ways.

"How are you, boys?" he said. "I reckon you might as well know all of us."

Then he introduced his partners and the girls.

This being over with, the young deadshot, who had found out that the name of the cowboy he had first spoken to was named Clark Trumper, said:

"Now then, if you can tell us where there is a good place to pitch our camp we'll make arrangements to stay here over night."

"Put up your tents anywhere yer please," was the reply. "You've got jest as much ter say about it as we have. But it don't make no difference. No one will say a word, not if yer camp in ther yard, right alongside a house. But what you've got ter look out fur is thieves. Yer want ter make sure ter do that."

"I reckon if any measly coyote tries ter rob us he'll git his medicine in a hurry," spoke up Cheyenne Charlie, as he gave the ends of his long dark mustache a twist. "We ain't in ther habit of bein' robbed, an' we don't like anyone ter try any sich game on us, either."

It was just then that a fight started in the thickest part of the crowd, where a three-card monte man was operating.

In less than two minutes half a dozen shots had been fired, and then a detachment of cavalry came galloping to the scene.

The cowboys ran over to find out what was going on, and nodding to his companions, Young Wild West said:

"I reckon we'll find a place to camp. Come on."

The party rode on, not paying any further attention to the trouble that had started in the crowd.

A hundred yards up the street they found a big vacant lot, and they promptly turned in.

"Get a move on you, Hop and Wing," our hero said, as

he dismounted, and the two Chinamen showed that there was nothing slow about them, when they felt disposed to work.

They slid from their bronchos and went at the work of unloading the pack-horses. There was a well not far distant, which belonged to the property they were on, and as there was a drinking trough for horses and cattle near it, they would have no trouble about getting water for their horses.

Wild and his two partners assisted the two Celestials, and the two tents they always carried with them were soon put up.

The girls took part in getting the camp in shape, and then, leaving Jim Dart to remain with the girls and put the finishing touches to the camp, our hero and Cheyenne Charlie walked over to the central part of the town again.

There was a railroad station a couple of hundred yards to the left, and a train was just coming in.

"I reckon we'll go over and see the crowd, Charlie," said Wild. "Most likely there will be a crowd to get off. This giving away land by the Government usually attracts big crowds, though about half of them don't really want the land after they get it."

"That's it, Wild," was the reply. "It's jest fur ther sake of gittin' it fur nothin' that makes 'em start out. But I s'pose this game is ther same as they had up in Wyoming once. Ther land don't become your property till yer put up a shanty on it, an' you've got a year ter do it in."

"I haven't any idea how this is going to be. But if we find that cowboy, who gave his name as Clark, he will be able to give us all the information, no doubt."

They had not gone very far when they met the very man they were talking about.

"Goin' over to ther station?" the cowboy asked. "Well, there'll be plenty more here in about two minutes. Yer didn't hear what ther fight was about a little while ago, did yer?"

"No; what was it?" Wild asked.

"Oh! a three-card monte man got ketched cheatin', an' he got shot, that's all."

It was just then that two very tough-looking men came riding toward them at a gallop, each swinging a rope and yelling as loud as they could.

As they were passing one of them threw his rope and lassoed the cowboy, pulling him to the ground and dragging him along through the dust.

Crack! As quick as a flash Young Wild West pulled a gun and fired, the bullet severing the rope!

The dashing young deadshot stood with the revolver in his hand, while Cheyenne Charlie ran to assist the cowboy to his feet.

Back the two came, the one who had made the successful throw with his lariat, leading.

"Did you shoot my rope in two, young feller?" he asked, showing surprise, as well as anger.

"I reckon I did," was the cool retort.

"What did yer do it fur?"

The man's eyes flashed now, and it was plain he was looking for fight.

"What did you rope that fellow for?" Wild answered, ignoring the question put to him.

"Jest fur fun, young feller. That's why I done it."

"Well, I cut your rope with a bullet just for fun, too, then."

"Yer did, eh? Well, you'll find there ain't no doubt about it, I sorter reckon."

The speaker dismounted and his companion followed suit.

They were both big, brawny men, and were no doubt a couple of bad cowpunchers, if looks went for anything.

Young Wild West smiled at them, for he was so used to having trouble with such fellows that he liked it rather than feared a conflict with them.

"So you think there won't be any fun about it, eh?" he asked, in his cool and easy way. "Well, what are you going to do?"

The other cowpuncher had his rope all ready, and without the least bit of warning, he made a throw, intending to catch the boy unawares.

But that was where he made a mistake.

Young Wild West was not to be caught in any sort of fashion.

He knew that the two men were after him, and he kept his eyes wide open.

He simply threw up his hand and caught the rope; and then, with a quick jerk, he pulled it away from the man.

"You two galoots take my advice and go on about your business," he said, the smile never once leaving his face. "If you don't I'll throw some hot lead your way!"

The revolver was still in his right hand, and though the muzzle pointed toward the ground, it could fly upward in the fraction of a second.

By this time Clark Trumper had got the dust out of his eyes, and grabbing his gun, he came forward.

"I don't know who you galoots are," he said, angrily. "But I'll make yer wish yer hadn't roped me, I'll bet! Git out in ther road! I'll make ther pair of yer dance!"

With great quickness, both cowpunchers jumped behind their horses.

A crowd began to gather now, for a shot is bound to draw them, and resolved upon showing the two rascals that they couldn't have their own way, Wild leaped around behind them and called out:

"Hold up your hands, you sneaking galoot! I reckon you've got to be made to understand that you don't amount to anything."

They were double-banked, so there was no alternative. Up went their hands, while the gathering crowd shouted in an approving way.

CHAPTER II.

WILD AND TERRIBLE RILEY, THE COWPUNCHER.

Young Wild West knew what the two horsemen were up to when they came dashing along, and he got ready for them in a hurry.

As the rope parted they quickly reined in their bronchos.

Somehow they understood that the two cowpunchers must have barked up the wrong tree, and they thoroughly enjoyed it.

The fact was that the two rough-looking fellows had been having it all their own way since they arrived a little before noon.

They had roped three or four men, and after dragging them through the dust had given them to understand that if they did not like it they could take hot lead.

But when they interfered with Young Wild West they had overstepped the limit, as they now knew to their sorrow.

"Gentlemen," said our hero, addressing his remarks to the crowd, "these galoots started in to have some fun with us. Does anyone think they are going to have it?"

A roar of laughter went up at this, while cries of "Not much!" "I reckon not!" and others of a similar character were heard.

Trumper, the cowboy, was now in a much better humor.

"What do yer think of it, boys?" he asked. "Ther galoot in ther green shirt lassoed me when I wasn't lookin', an' as I was bein' dragged through ther dirt Young Wild West pulls his gun an' shoots ther rope in two! No one but ther Champion Deadshot of ther West could have done sich a thing as that at their first shot, I reckon."

There was more shouting then, and the crowd, which had increased to fifty or more, closed in until the principals were surrounded completely.

Many of them had heard of Young Wild West, it seemed, and that was why they were so anxious to get close to him.

"Take it easy, gentlemen," said Wild, who did not want them to get so close that the two cowpunchers might have a chance to get away in the crowd.

He was not quite through with them, for he thought it would be a good idea to impress it on their minds that they had made a big mistake in acting that way, and he meant to make a lasting impression, too.

The two were still holding up their hands, so he quickly stepped over to them.

"Do you think you have had fun enough?" the boy asked.

"Oh! you've got ther drop on us, an' so has your pards," replied the one who had roped Trumper. "I reckon yer don't expect a feller ter put up a fight under sich conditions, do yer?"

"I don't believe you've got sand enough to fight a fair fight, anyhow."

"Yer don't? Well, jest give me ther chance! I'll take you by ther back of your neck an' make your heels knock together so hard that yer won't be able ter walk fur a week! I'm Terrible Riley, I am, an' when I gits hold of a galoot once there's bound ter be some ribs cracked."

"Oh! is that so? Well, suppose you get hold of me? I am only a boy, I know; but I reckon I am not afraid of you, as big as you are!"

A silence came over the crowd right away.

Evidently the majority of those present thought the boy rather foolish to issue such a challenge, for the big

cowpuncher must have weighed at least a hundred and ninety, and he was rawboned and muscular.

Clark Trumper looked at the scout, as though he felt that Young Wild West was making a mistake in giving the rascally fellow a chance to get hold of him.

But the scout only grinned.

He knew that Young Wild West was as quick as lightning, and as strong as a young lion.

He had no fear that the big man would do him any damage.

"Did yer mean what yer said?" asked Terrible Riley, acting as if he hardly thought he had heard aright.

"I certainly did," was the cool retort. "Get yourself in shape. If you get hold of me I suppose I'll be traveling around with a couple of broken ribs, or something of the kind. But if you don't happen to get hold of me, look out! I might hurt you."

A few in the crowd laughed derisively, they no doubt thinking that the boy was making a foolish boast.

"Git back a little an' give 'em a chance ter fight it out!" called out Cheyenne Charlie, pulling his gun. "I want it understood that ther first galoot what interferes will git a chunk of lead. We don't stand fur no foolin'. We're ther straight goods, every time, an' don't yer furgit it!"

The crowd spread back a little, and Terrible Riley stepped around his horse and stopped in about the center of the human ring.

Men were coming all the time now, and a few of the females, who were waiting for the rush to begin, also crowded up.

Many of them did not know what was going on, and all of them could not even see the middle of the ring.

The other cowpuncher stood by the horses, he showing no signs that would indicate his interfering.

But the confident look on his face showed plainly that he expected Terrible Riley to make short work of the boy.

"This is goin' ter be a wrastle, an' no shootin' in it," said the big villain, looking uneasily at the scout.

"That's what it's goin' ter be, you measly coyote!" Charlie answered. "It's a case of a big, raw-boned galoot ag'in a boy. I'll bet a hundred dollars that ther breath will be knocked out of your body inside of two minutes, too!"

"I'll take that bet!" shouted a man nearby. "Of course yer mean that ther boy is goin' ter do it?"

"That's jest what I mean. Put your dust up. I reckon Trumper will suit me as ther stakeholder."

Charlie was in earnest about it, and he quickly handed the cowboy two fifty-dollar bills.

The man quickly covered the amount, and then Wild stepped toward the big villain.

"Are you ready to take hold of me?" he asked, coolly.

"Yes!" shouted Terrible Riley, and then he made a rush, grabbing with both hands.

But the agile young deadshot easily got out of the way, and the result was that the cowpuncher's hand clutched naught but the empty air.

As his ponderous form shot past him, Wild seized him about the waist and turned him over his hip.

Thud!

Terrible Riley went to the ground with such force as to fairly jar it.

"There yer are!" cried Cheyenne Charlie. "I reckon I win ther hundred. If that galoot's breath wasn't knocked out of him I'm a lame coyote with no tail, that's all!"

The big cowpuncher turned over on his side, doubled up and then groaned.

"You win," said Clark Trumper, and as the man, who had wagered the money with the scout, gave an exclamation of disgust, he handed it over.

"Thank yer!" and the scout nodded and grinned. "Now jest wait till ther big galoot gits up. He's goin' ter git ther worst maulin' that a man ever got."

CHAPTER III.

THE LAND SHARKS AND THE CLEVER CHINAMAN.

While the crowd was gathered in a circle watching Young Wild West and Terrible Riley, the big cowpuncher, let us turn our attention to the rear room of a nearby saloon and see what is transpiring there.

Seated at a round table were four men, whose general appearance might have indicated that they were prosperous ranchmen.

But such was not the case, however, for the four were what are called "Land Sharks"—men who make a business of selling land that does not belong to them, and swindling those who pay the price asked for same, or make deposits.

Whether they had anyone in the Government employ to help them or not, these men had already marked out certain lots at what was called the Comanche Strip, and when others had taken them and claimed them as their own, they meant to come around and demand money for them, especially if they were built upon.

It was an easy way to make money, if it would work, and the four schemers were quite sure that it would.

"Well, boys," said one of them, whose name was Thompson, and who was the leader in the game, "it may be that we will have trouble out at the Strip, and that means that we must get some of the bad element on our side. That will be easy enough, I guess. But of course we won't need them unless the fraud is discovered before we have a chance to get away. We won't do a thing until after the lots have all been distributed, and then we'll come in for a few thousands. After a man has started to build a house on a piece of land he will be apt to give up a little something rather than go away and leave it there. Ha, ha, ha!"

Thompson laughed, as though he thought it a great joke, and the others joined him.

"How much did you say that we have got to give up when we git ther money?" asked one of them.

"Ten cents on every dollar, Jake," was the reply. "You know who gits that, of course."

"Oh! yes, I know. Mighty crooked work, I reckon."

"Of course it's crooked work. Our papers an' deeds

is all forged, ain't they? An' didn't a Government man do ther forgin'? Crooked? Well, I reckon so?"

This was from Al Herring, who sat on the left of Bob Thompson, the leader in the game.

Mark Grote, the fourth man, nodded.

"But ther deeds will look ter be jest as genuine as ther ones they'll git there to-morrer. Oh! we're bound ter do well out of this. Ther only thing about it is that I'm afraid there won't be many houses started right away."

"Well, they won't git no deeds till they do," said Thompson. "But what difference does that make? Ther papers we've got are all filled out but the numbers of the lots and the blocks they're in. That gives us the chance to claim anything we like, don't it? I guess the man I made arrangements with knew what he was doing. But if he ever gets found out he's likely to get hanged or shot, I guess."

"An' we won't be far behind," added Jake Patty, shrugging his shoulders.

"Don't think anything like that, for we won't stay there long enough for anything like that to happen," Thompson declared.

The four men were drinking and smoking, and they had the room, which was but a small one, all to themselves.

There was a door that opened into the big yard in the rear of the building, and as it was a pretty warm day, this was now open.

They talked on over their plans and drank from the bottle that had been supplied to them by the boss of the place every now and then.

Suddenly a shadow darkened the doorway, and looking up, they beheld an innocent-looking Chinaman standing there.

It was Hop Wah, who was sometimes called Young Wild West's Clever Chinaman.

He bowed and smiled to the four men, and none of them dreamed of such a thing that he had been listening to their conversation for the past ten minutes, and that he had taken in quite enough of it to satisfy him that they were crooks, pure and simple.

But such was indeed the case.

The Chinaman slipped away from the camp shortly after Wild and Charlie left, for the purpose of visiting one of the saloons.

He did not want to go in by the front way, for there was too rough a crowd hanging around to suit him.

While he generally managed to take care of himself pretty well, he knew he would stand no show if a lot got after him at one time.

Hop had chosen the saloon that was nearest, and it happened that as he reached it he heard the four men talking about crooked work.

Then he listened, and being able to understand English better than he could speak it, he knew pretty well what the scheming villains were up to.

"How do, so be?" he said, smiling at them. "Me likee havee lillie dlink of tanglefoot. Me comee in um backee way, so bad Melican mans no hurtee poor Chineee."

"Go on in ther barroom, if yer want whisky," one of the four answered, gruffly. "This is a private party."

"Allee light. You velly nicee Melican man; me likee you."

The others laughed, and the man who had spoken frowned.

He was Al Herring, and he was one of the sort who do not think a great deal of a "Heathen Chineese."

He was just about to get up from the table and help the Chinaman out of the room with his foot, when Hop drew some cigars from his pocket.

They were innocent-looking cigars, too, and no one would have thought there was anything wrong about them.

But there was, as will be seen.

"You havee lilllee smokee, nicee Melican mans?" he said, smiling blandly. "Me buy um boxee velly nicee cigars in Santa Fe, an' me likee tleat nicee Melican mans."

The cigars looked to be better than the ones they had purchased of the saloonkeeper, so the four rascally land sharks could not resist the temptation to take them.

Hop calmly struck a match and lighted one himself, and then he stepped over and placed four of them on the table.

Each took one, smelled it and gave a nod.

"Havanas, all right," commented Thompson. "I know something about tobacco, boys."

Then he looked up at Hop, who was still standing there, and said:

"You're a stranger here, ain't you, heathen?"

"Lat light; me comee lilllee while ago, so be," was the reply.

"Come with some of the rushers, I s'pose?" spoke up Jake Patty.

Hop shook his head in the negative.

"Me allee samee comee with Young Wild West, so be," he answered.

"Young Wild West!" echoed Bob Thompson, half raising to his feet. "Is that boy here?"

"He velly muchee here," Hop answered, apparently not noticing the man's agitated manner. "Me allee samee Young Wild West's Clevee Chineese. Me velly muchee smartee."

The four land sharks looked at each other.

It was evident that the name of Young Wild West was not new to them.

"All right, heathen," Thompson said, nodding to the Chinaman; "go on out and get your tanglefoot. Shut the door after you, for this is a private party."

Hop bowed and went on through.

Then Thompson struck the table with his fist and exclaimed:

"I guess there may be trouble, boys. What can Young Wild West be doing here, if there is not trouble brewing? Why, he's the boy who is always hunting down crooks and outlaws; and he helps the soldiers trail down the bad Indians. He's got a big pull with the Government, I've heard. I never saw him, but they say he is only a boy; yet he can do more than a dozen men. Suppose this scheme of ours has leaked out, and he is on our trail?"

"I don't see how it could have leaked out, Bob," spoke up Grote. "There's only one besides us four that knows anything about it, an' yer kin bet all you're worth that

he wouldn't say nothin' about it. It wouldn't be healthy fur him if he did, 'cause he's doin' ther real crooked work."

"That's so," and Thompson looked relieved. "Well, it may be that Young Wild West has just happened along, and that he wants to see the excitement. Maybe he means to help boom the new town."

Then he threw down the short piece of cigar he had been smoking and lighted one of the four the Chinaman had placed upon the table.

His three companions did likewise.

"A mighty good cigar," observed Herring, as he blew out a mouthful of smoke and then wafted it to his nostrils with his hand. "That heathen must be a sort of high-toned one."

Then he took a couple of more puffs.

He was certainly smoking harder than the rest, and the smoke was fairly flying.

Suddenly there was a sharp hiss, and then—

Bang!

Herring's cigar exploded with a report almost as loud as that of a shotgun.

Over he went, chair and all, while his companions sprang to their feet in alarm.

Bang!

Bang!

Bang!

As though they had been timed, the other three cigars exploded one after the other, and in quick succession, too.

The room was so thick with smoke that the four land sharks could not see each other.

They stumbled over each other in an effort to get out, and when the door opened and the proprietor came in to see what had happened, they were conscious of hearing a shrill voice say:

"Velly goodee cigars, so be. Makee plenty noisee; up-settee Melican mans!"

Bob Thompson was the first to rush out into the bar-room. He had a gun in his hand, too; but the clever Chinaman had gone.

CHAPTER IV.

WILD PROTECTS THE CLEVER CHINAMAN.

Young Wild West stood with folded arms, waiting for Terrible Riley to get upon his feet.

It was fully half a minute before he made anything like an attempt to do this, and then he remained upon the ground in a sitting posture until he had about gathered his wind and his wits.

"I went down putty hard, I reckon," he observed, trying to smile, but making a failure of it. "But that was an accident. Ther boy tripped me. I ain't s'posed ter be as quick on my feet as he is."

"I reckon yer ain't," answered Cheyenne Charlie, with a laugh. "If you was half as quick as he is you might stand a little show. But you ain't quick enough ter kill a 'skeeter, you ain't. You're nothin' but a big, clumsy

galoot, with not enough sand in yer ter take ther edge off a razor. You're a four-flusher from Make-Believe Town! You're no good!"

"Jest wait till I git done with ther boy; then I'll show yer if I ain't some good!" cried the big villain, flying in a rage. "I'll——"

"Me first, Mr. Terrible Riley," interrupted our hero. "Come on and break my ribs for me. I am just anxious to have it done."

Then the man gathered himself together and made a rush for the boy, doing it so suddenly that many of the lookers-on thought he was surely going to succeed this time.

But Wild was watching him, and down he dropped.

His head went between the villain's legs, and then he straightened up with wonderful quickness, carrying the heavy man with him.

There was but one thing that could happen, and that was that Riley had to go over, unless the young deadshot chose to balance him there.

But he did not choose to do this.

Instead, he made a sudden lurch forward, letting go the man's ankles and dropping upon his hands.

Terrible Riley turned a complete somersault and landed heavily on his back.

The yell that went up was pure applause, and nothing else, for the crowd was being treated to the kind of a performance that was not exactly common.

To see a mere boy handle a big man in that way was entirely new to them, and that they liked it need hardly be said.

This time Terrible Riley was not hurt quite as much.

But he was goaded to madness now, and quickly getting upon his knees, he drew an ugly-looking knife from the sheath at his belt and started for our hero.

"I'll kill yer fur that!" he hissed. "I'll kill yer, an' I don't care what happens ter me fur doin' it, either!"

Wild leaped in the air and came down upon his shoulders with both feet.

Flat to the ground went the enraged villain, the knife falling from his hand.

But the boy was not done with him yet. He seized him by his shirt collar, and with remarkable quickness pulled him upon his feet.

Spat!

Then a blow from a clenched fist that seemed as hard as iron caught Terrible Riley between the eyes.

Spat!

Another one in the same place and he rolled over on his side, beaten to a finish!

"I reckon that will be about all," said Young Wild West, turning to the crowd. "That big galoot don't know how to wrestle, and he don't know how to fight. But he does know how to hold a grudge, I am sure. But if he tries to look for satisfaction, and shows a gun or knife in doing it, I am going to put a chunk of hot lead through him!"

Then the boy coolly pushed his way through the crowd, followed by Cheyenne Charlie and Clark Trumper.

It was just then that a series of loud reports sounded from the saloon, a couple of hundred feet further up the street.

The crowd turned and hurried that way, and our friends went along, too.

There was surely plenty of excitement in Grizzly Junction that afternoon, and the long night was still to come.

Just what might happen there before morning no one could imagine.

Probably fifty people had arrived on the train, and they were parading through the street, looking for a place to get something to eat, and making lots of noise about it.

When Wild was within a hundred feet of the saloon he saw Hop coming toward him.

The Chinaman acted as though he was in pretty much of a hurry.

"What's the matter, Hop?" our hero asked.

"Me havee lillee fun with four bad Melican mans, Mislir Wild," was the reply. "Me allee samee blowee uppee with um loaddee cigars, so be."

"Oh! that is it, eh?"

"Yes, Mislir Wild. Me wantee tellee sometling."

Hop was all seriousness now, and Wild knew that he had something of importance to say.

Charlie and the cowboy were right behind our hero, and they were keeping a watch, as they did not know but that Terrible Riley and his friend might follow.

But this was not the case.

It was evident that the big villain was satisfied, for the present, anyhow.

"What's ther matter with ther heathen?" asked the scout. "We might have knowed that he'd sneak away from ther camp as soon as you left, Wild. What's he been doin'?"

"I am just going to find out, Charlie," was the reply.

"Wait here a minute until I have a little talk with Hop."

Charlie understood right away. He knew that there was something of importance that the Chinaman had to communicate with the young deadshot.

So he stood in front of a store with Trumper, while our hero and Hop went around a corner.

"Go ahead, Hop," said Wild. "What about the four men?"

"Ley go to um place where um new town go to be, and ley allee samee makee crooked work, so be."

"Is that so?"

"Yes, me allee samee hear whattee ley say. Ley gottee papers allee samee no goodee, and when somebody makee house on um land ley comee 'long and say um land allee samee belongee to lem. Len makee pay money, allee samee pletty quickee. Velly muchee bad scheme, so be."

"Jingo! I should say so! Land Sharks, I reckon. Well, how did you come to give them the loaded cigars?"

Hop quickly told him all about it, and he related everything he had heard, even to the fact that the men seemed uneasy when they heard his name mentioned.

"Well, I reckon we'll have something to do with this game," our hero said, half to himself. "According to what you heard them say, there must be one of the Government land agents in on this game. Well, I reckon we'll find out something about this. Hop, just lead the way to the saloon where the four galoots are."

"Allee light, Misler Wild."

The Chinaman was not a bit afraid of being harmed by anyone now, for he was with the Champion Deadshot of the West, and he knew he was sure of being protected.

They joined the scout and the cowboy, and then Wild said:

"Come on, boys. Hop has played a joke on three or four crooks in the saloon, and I want him to point them out to me."

He did not say just then what was up, for he thought there was no use in letting Trumper know about it.

That would probably be the means of letting it out, and then the villains would get wind of it.

The four were forced to push their way into the saloon, for a big crowd had gathered there.

Four reports, almost like a shotgun fusilade, and a cloud of smoke coming from the place, was quite enough to draw a crowd.

When Young Wild West and his companions got inside the proprietor was trying to explain that a rascally Chinaman had given some of his friends cigars that were loaded with powder.

Some were laughing; others were looking amazed, and a few acted as though they would like to get hold of the Chinaman and make short work of him.

When the latter saw a Chinaman coming in among them they got ready to give vent to their wrath.

Young Wild West's quick eyes took all this in at a sweeping glance.

Just then Bob Thompson, one of the victims of Hop's joke, came out of the rear room.

"There he is!" he cried. "That's the heathen who played the trick on us! Just let me get at him!"

He made a rush for him, and half a dozen others followed.

Wild jerked a gun from the holster at his side, and planting himself before Hop, exclaimed:

"Hold on! I reckon one is enough to tackle a common Chineese! Take it easy, boys!"

They stopped quickly enough.

"If you'll just wait a minute or two you will find out that the heathen is all right," went on our hero, in his cool and easy way. "He is no common mortal, you can bet! He played a joke on somebody, and perhaps he should not have done it. But give him a chance, and he will show you that he is all right."

Hop took the cue, and stepping out in front of the belligerent men, he apparently drew a fancy parasol from his mouth, and raising it, he placed it over his head and bowed.

Between Wild's revolver and the parasol, the case was temporarily settled.

But Hop did not lose any time about showing what he could do.

Suddenly he closed the parasol, and then he proceeded to eat it.

It was a trick affair, jointed, so it could be got together in a very small compass, and instead of going down the Chinaman's throat it went together in his hand.

When he made out that he had swallowed the last of it, and that it cost him a mighty effort to do it, Hop bowed again and said:

"Me allee samee velly muchee smartee Chineese, so be. Me velly solly me makee Melican mans allee samee mad."

"That's all right," said Bob Thompson, stepping back. "I'll accept the apology. But what is the boy going to do with that gun?"

"Shoot the first galoot who interferes with the Chinaman!" answered Wild, coolly.

CHAPTER V.

THE LAND SHARKS GET ACQUAINTED WITH YOUNG WILD WEST.

Young Wild West certainly meant business, as he stood facing Thompson, the leader of the Land Sharks.

If he had not heard that he was a villain the chances are that he would not have been so anxious to have it out with him. But the fact that he was the leading one in a plot to rob some of the innocent ones who were going to build shanties in the new town made the boy detest him.

"You heard what I said," he remarked, as he played with the trigger of his revolver. "I reckon you are not deaf, are you?"

A stillness came over the saloon, for everyone had heard what was said, and the wonderful coolness of the young deadshot had a peculiar effect on the crowd.

Bob Thompson looked at his three friends, who had come out of the rear room after him, and then he turned his gaze upon those in the place.

No one showed any signs of resenting what our hero said, so he got little satisfaction by looking around.

"Well, I don't know as anybody wants to kill the Chineese," he said, speaking as though he had meant nothing wrong. "But he ought to have a good kicking for playing such a trick as he did upon us. What right had he to give us cigars that were loaded with powder?"

"What right had you to take them?" Wild asked, smiling at the query.

Thompson shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, that's right," he admitted. "I suppose we did wrong in accepting them. But it was quite enough to make us mad, I think. Why, it might have been that we had lost our eyesight, or something like that."

"Well, I reckon the next time a Chinaman offers you a cigar you will know better than to take it. Now then, are you willing to let it drop?"

"Oh! there ain't nothing to drop, as I know of, young fellow."

"There might be, if you keep it up."

The boy spoke in a way that meant something, and there was not a man there who did not know that he referred to Thompson.

Wild knew that he had the situation well in hand.

There was no one else who showed any inclination to take it up.

Thompson now walked to the further end of the bar, and then his three partners in the swindling game joined him.

They talked a minute in low tones, and then he turned and called out:

"Young fellow, I would like to know who you are, if you feel disposed to inform me."

"Oh! I'll give you that information, all right," replied our hero. "My name is Young Wild West."

"Ah! Thank you. I had an idea that was who you were."

There were several in the place who evidently had heard of the dashing young deadshot, for instantly there were bits of conversation being carried on in different parts of the room, while the boy became the center of attraction again.

Then it was that Clark Trumper made himself heard.

"Boys," said he, "it's Young Wild West, as sure as you're born! If you'd seen him lick a big cowpuncher a little while ago you would have noticed that he's a whole team, harnessed for tough work. He chucked ther galoot, who is about twice as big as he is, over his head, an' ther ground jarred when he struck. You know ther cowpuncher, some of yer. He calls himself Terrible Riley."

"Here he comes now!" exclaimed one of those who had witnessed the encounter outside. "Maybe he's lookin' for satisfaction."

Then there was a hustle in the saloon.

The men were anxious to get out of danger of being shot by accident, and the bar was soon clear.

Sure enough, Terrible Riley came in, followed by his partner.

They both showed surprised when they saw Wild there, but there was nothing in the way of a move to pull a gun, so the expectant spectators began to breathe easier.

"Let's have a cigar," said Wild, coolly turning to the man behind the counter.

The box was passed over, and when Charlie and the cowboy had helped themselves, he took one and lighted it.

Terrible Riley and his friend walked around to the other end of the bar, and after hesitating a moment, ordered what they wanted.

That was all there was to it.

The big cowpuncher was not looking for any revenge just then, no matter how he felt about it.

Hop had taken his place right among the crowd, and fearing that he might get in trouble if left there, our hero called him to go to the camp with them.

"Allee light," was the reply, and then the clever Chinaman struck a match and lighted a cigar.

It was one of the loaded ones, though there was not enough in it to hurt anyone, especially if they were aware of what was going to happen.

He gave a few vigorous puffs and then walked to the center of the room.

Taking the cigar from his mouth, he made a flourish with it, and a bow at the same time.

Bang!

The cigar exploded, and uttering a yell, Hop ran out of the place.

Nearly everyone there laughed but the victims of the joke that had been played upon them.

If he had been victimized himself Hop could not have acted it any better.

The most of them made up their minds that the Chinaman was a very comical fellow, indeed.

Wild and Charlie left the cowboy and went on back to the camp, Hop going with them.

It was pretty near suppertime, and they were hungry.

Wild had not bought cigars because he wanted them just then, so he threw the one he had lighted away.

Charlie did likewise, for he would rather have a pipe than a cigar, any time.

But neither of them smoked a great deal. Wild did it because he did not drink anything strong, and cigars were sold at most of the places he came to.

They found Wing preparing a first-class meal, and this made them feel more satisfied than ever.

The odor of broiling venison is apt to sharpen one's appetite, anyhow, and when hot corn muffins are turned out at the same time it will not lessen the hungry feeling any.

There were plenty of small parties camping out in the vacant lots of the town, but it is doubtful if there was any as well equipped as our friends.

But since they made a practice of traveling around on horseback, stopping anywhere they chanced to be when night came on, this was to be expected.

Columns of smoke were rising here and there, and taking it altogether, Grizzly Junction had on a very lively aspect.

Our friends ate their supper with a relish, and then there was nothing to do but to pass the time as quietly as possible.

There were a few things they needed, so Jim and Wing went to the store after it became dark and got them.

There was no doubt but many wagonloads of provisions and other common necessities would be taken to the site of the new town, but there was no need of them waiting till they got there to replenish their stock.

Such articles were high enough at the Junction, let alone at a new town.

Wild decided to remain right at the camp until morning.

Though there would be much to be had in the way of excitement, if he chose to go about the town, he thought it best to remain quiet.

If he did go out he would surely get into trouble, for he had enemies there.

The Junction was quite a place, since it had a railway outlet, and the stores and buildings were far different from an ordinary mining camp.

But notwithstanding the evidences of advanced civilization, our hero did not think it anything like a safe place to go to sleep in.

Consequently a watch was to be kept, just the same as though they were in a hostile Indian country, or in some place where they knew they were threatened by outlaws or renégades.

It was a pretty noisy night they passed through, though the yelling and occasional shots were not heard by the sleepers, and whoever happened to be on the watch at the time did not pay any attention.

Wild relieved Jim Dart shortly before three in the morning.

So far, nothing had happened to interfere with them, beyond the noise.

The young deadshot had about come to the conclusion that they were to be let alone.

But in less than half an hour after Jim retired and went to sleep for the second time that night, our hero heard a stealthy footfall close by.

He happened to be standing behind a tree at the time, with the tents less than twenty feet from him.

The well-trained ears of the boy located the direction the sound came from, and then he peered through the darkness and was just in time to catch sight of a shadowy form as it dropped slowly to the ground.

Young Wild West knew what the shadowy form was.

It was a man, and he had dropped upon his hands and knees, in order that he might reach the camp unobserved, in case there should be anyone awake.

"I reckon you'll be a surprised galoot before many minutes!" Wild muttered, under his breath. "I'll just go and meet you."

Then he dropped silently to the ground and started to creep toward the spot.

CHAPTER VI.

A DIABOLICAL PLOT.

Though he had been forced to take water from Young Wild West, Bob Thompson, the leader of the Land Sharks, had made up his mind that he was going to prevent the boy from interfering with the plans they had laid down.

He knew enough of the ways of the dashing young deadshot to make him feel certain that they would have trouble at the Comanche Strip, if the boy went there.

This was quite enough to cause him to hate Wild and his partners, and the fact that he had been called before a big crowd by the boy, only added fuel to the flame.

But there was no doubt but that the man was afraid of the boy, and he thought it over after our friends left the saloon, and came to the conclusion that he and his three pards would need a little help in the matter.

Neither of them knew Terrible Riley, but it was but natural that they should hit upon him as one who would likely go into a deal with them.

He must surely hate the boy for what he received at his hands, and it was easy to judge the character of the man.

Thompson held a short consultation with his three pards, and the result was that Terrible Riley was called into the back room.

"We don't know you, my friend," said the leader, "but it is all right, anyhow. We take it for granted that you don't like this boy they call Young Wild West, and that is why we want to talk to you."

"I reckon you're right, if yer think I don't like Young Wild West, boss," answered Riley, making an ugly grimace. "He done somethin' ter me that there ain't no

man I ever met as could do. He handled me like as if I was nothin' but a little kid, an' he hurt me, too. I'm sore this minute from what I got. There ain't no use of my sayin' that he didn't do it fair enough, either, 'cause there was so many as seen it that I'd be laughed at, if I did. But, from what I've jest heard say out in ther bar, he sorter took ther starch out of you, too."

"Yes, he certainly made me take water. I either had to do it or die, I suppose. I don't want to die, of course; I would much rather have Young Wild West to do that act."

"Well, you kin bet your life that he will die, boss! I'm a bad man, I am! I never lets a galoot git away, after I once mark him fur ter be planted. I might git held back a little; but I always do ther job in ther end. Young Wild West is my meat! I don't care if you go out an' tell it ter everybody!"

Terrible Riley became so excited that he raised his voice to a high pitch.

"Sh!" cautioned Thompson. "There is no use in letting everyone know your feeling toward the boy. Sit down, and then we'll have a drink and talk it over."

"What's ther matter with me fetchin' my chum in?" asked the bad man. "He's jest as good as gold, he is. His name is Hunker—Tomato Hunker, they calls him, 'cause he's been known ter punch a hole in a can of tomatoes and suck ebery drop from it without stoppin'. Tomato is very fond of tomatoes, you bet! But he's willin' ter do about anything he's told ter, providin' there's anything in it. Of course he'll help me make short work of Young Wild West; there ain't no doubt about that."

The four villains smiled and looked much pleased.

That they had struck just the two men they needed they all felt certain of.

"Fetch your friend in, by all means," said Thompson. "This room is our private property until the rush starts in the morning. We could not hire anything in the line of bedding with it, but we have got the room. We are going to sleep the best we can to-night, and we'll be as fresh as the majority of them when the start is made, I think."

"I reckon so," answered Riley. "Well, I'll go an' git Tomato."

He went out, and Jake Patty stood at the door until he came back.

The bad man's pard was waiting for him, and a couple of words brought him to the door of the room.

They were admitted, and then Patty turned the key in the lock, remarking as he did so:

"This is our room, so I reckon we ain't goin' ter allow no one ter come in. Al, jest lock ther outside door, too. That was ther way ther heathen come in, yer know."

"All right," was the reply, and the villain addressed did so.

Tomato, as he was called, looked a bit abashed in the presence of the four men, who had all the appearance of being prosperous ranchmen, but he sat down and became more easy when he saw that his pard appeared to be quite at home.

"Well, Tomato," said Terrible Riley, "here's four men what likes Young Wild West jest about as much as we do. They want ter talk a little business with us."

"All right," was the reply. "I'm willin' ter do that. I s'pose they know what kind of men we are?"

"Yes; I've told 'em that we're mighty bad, when we git started."

"Which is right, an' yer kin bet all you're worth on it!"

Tomato nodded his head, and then proceeded to bite a small chunk from a tobacco plug.

Thompson was well satisfied that the two men could be trusted, so he said:

"I suppose you intend to leave with the crowd in the morning?"

"Yes," came the reply.

"So do we. And so do Young Wild West and his friends, I suppose. But see here, boys! We've got a little game on that will make us quite a pile of money when we get to the Strip—that is, if no one interferes with us. Now, you ought to think, as well as us, that Young Wild West is apt to interfere with us. He is a very meddlesome fellow, as you no doubt realize. We don't want the boy and his pards to interfere with us. Do you understand?"

"I reckon he won't interfere very much," said Tomato, his eyes flashing in a dangerous way. "Riley has marked him ter die, an' I'm goin' ter help him ter do ther job."

"Yes, I know that. But suppose you should change your minds, and let him live?"

"We ain't goin' ter do that, boss," spoke up Riley.

"Well, let me tell you something, then," and Thompson lowered his voice to a whisper. "If you two fellows see to it that it will be impossible for Young Wild West and his pards to interfere with us after we get to the Strip, we'll give you each a hundred dollars. How does that strike you?"

"Fine!" cried Tomato, brightening up. "I reckon a hundred will come in mighty handy jest about now."

"That's right," chimed in Riley, showing his satisfaction by grinning broadly. "Ther two hundred will be ours. Why, we won't let ther galoots start with ther rush, boss!"

"Good! That's the way I like to hear you talk. You will simply be getting your revenge, and helping us out at the same time. But you will each get a hundred apiece, which will come in handy, as you just said."

"Oh! it'll come in handy, that's sure," declared Terrible Riley.

"Well, when the news is circulated that Young Wild West and his two pards have been killed in a fight, and we find that there is no mistake about it, you just come and get your money. I'll guarantee that you'll find it right here, waiting for you. If you don't you can shoot me, that's all!"

"Oh! we'll take your word, boss," Riley said, assuringly. "We ain't afraid of anything crooked bein' done. When ther sun comes up to-morrer mornin' there won't be any more Young Wild West. Why, that will be awful easy!"

"Don't figure on it bein' too easy, Riley," advised Tomato. "Yer know what ther boy done to yer not very long ago."

"That's all right," was the reply. "But he ain't goin'

ter be let have ther chance ter do anything this time. We must do ther business on ther sly."

"Of course! Of course!" exclaimed Thompson. "You will not be foolish enough to challenge the boy and his partners to come out and fight. That would be fool-hardy, indeed. They call him the Champion Deadshot of the West, and I haven't any doubt that he is entitled to the name."

Jake Patty, Al Herring and Mark Grote nodded to show that they agreed with the man they called their leader.

Thompson opened the door and called for a bottle of whisky and some glasses.

He paid the exorbitant price demanded without a murmur, and then the two bad men were treated.

As they drank they talked the matter over, and it was finally understood that Terrible Riley and Tomato were to wait until late in the night, and then steal upon the camp of Young Wild West and blow our friends to pieces with a stick of dynamite!

It was a diabolical plot, but the four Land Sharks simply shrugged their shoulders when Riley suggested it.

Just why such a thought came into the villain's head is hard to say; but it surely showed how determined he was to be revenged upon the dashing boy, who had so easily defeated him in wrestling and fighting.

But, as the reader is aware, there are men in this world who will not stop at anything when fired to a vengeful feeling, or, more, a money consideration.

It was both that stirred these two scoundrels on, and while the four men who sanctioned the thing were not going to take part in it, they were surely as bad at heart as they.

Terrible Riley knew where to get the dynamite, and some little after the hour of midnight when he came and told the Land Sharks that he had it, and that he was ready to carry out the plot, they did not change their minds.

They knew something of the record of the dashing young deadshot, and they wanted him fixed, so he could not interfere with their scheme.

Riley and his pal waited until they thought the proper time had arrived, and then they set out to creep upon the camp of Young Wild West.

One thing we will say about them, and that was that they were not aware that there were three innocent girls asleep in the camp, for they had not witnessed the arrival of the party.

CHAPTER VII.

WILD SAVES THE LIVES OF HIMSELF AND COMPANIONS.

Young Wild West was just as cautious as though he had been in the act of creeping upon an Indian camp.

Though he did not estimate the man he had seen as equal to a hostile redskin, he knew that if he must take him by surprise he should be as noiseless as possible.

He rounded a group of trees, and then he saw the fellow making straight for the camp, less than twenty feet from him.

But that was not all he saw! The light shining from the stars disclosed another man, who must have crept up ahead of the one he had spotted.

Wild moved rapidly now, for there was something about the actions of the two that he did not like.

The one who was already within a short distance of the camp motioned for the other to stop where he was.

Wild kept right on going, for it was the nearest one to the camp he wanted first.

It occurred to him that the motion made for the other to keep back meant that something was likely to happen.

The young deadshot soon overtook the man.

Just then a match was struck.

Wild pounced upon him and sent him sprawling to the ground.

His left hand gripped his throat tightly, and taken completely by surprise, the prowler was at his mercy.

But the other must have heard the struggle, for he came running hurriedly to the scene.

"Hello!" called out Wild, suddenly. "Charlie! Jim!"

He could easily have dispatched the pair of them, but he did not want to do it.

What he did want was to make them prisoners.

The scout and Dart came out of the tent in a hurry, while the other villain turned and fled, like the coward he was.

Wild heard him going, and as his two partners came upon the scene he said:

"Try and get the galoot who is running away, boys! I've got this one."

The two did not wait a second.

They had heard the receding footsteps, and they went in hot pursuit.

Of course the two men who came to the camp in such a stealthy manner were Terrible Riley and his pard, Tomato.

It was the latter who had agreed to light the stick of dynamite and hurl it into the tent that was nearest him.

This happened to be the one that was occupied by the girls, so if Young Wild West had not seen him coming a terrible murder would have been committed.

Wild did not know that the man had a stick of dynamite, but the fact that he struck a match was ample proof that he meant to cause an explosion.

The stick of dynamite flew from the hand of Tomato when he was seized and thrown to the ground, but it happened to strike upon a soft spot, so there was really no danger of it exploding.

Wild quickly brought him to his senses when he thrust the muzzle of a revolver under his nose.

"You keep still, you sneaking galoot!" he said. "I reckon you're about done for. It wouldn't take a great deal to make me let a bullet go through your head!"

"Don't shoot me, Young Wild West!" gasped the villain, who knew well enough who had him. "I didn't come here ter do yer any harm. I only wanted ter see what your camp looked like."

Wild did not know who it was, for he had not heard the man talk before, and it was too dark for him to recognize him as the pal of Terrible Riley.

He was of the opinion that he had caught one of the Land Sharks.

Charlie and Jim had gone right on, so our hero now forced his prisoner to get upon his feet.

"Move along, you scoundrel!" he said, in a low tone of voice. "If you value your life, do as I say."

"Don't shoot me!" gasped the villain. "I'll do jest as yer say. I didn't mean nothin' by sneakin' around your camp. I jest wanted ter find out how many was there. I wasn't doin' it 'cause I wanted ter know myself; it was others as told me ter come."

The man was so badly frightened that he was ready to give the whole plot away.

Wild pushed him into the camp.

He made enough noise about it to arouse Arietta, who at once came out of the tent.

"Light a lantern, Et," said Wild, coolly. "I've got a prisoner."

Arietta was not much surprised at hearing this.

She was pretty well used to such things, and she quickly lighted a lantern.

Then she stepped up and held it before the prisoner's face.

"It is Terrible Riley's pard," said our hero. "Ah! I suppose he was up to something that meant destruction for us. What did you light a match for, you sneaking hound?"

The boy turned fiercely upon him as he made the query.

"I wanted ter see, that's all," was the reply.

While this might be a truthful answer, both Wild and Arietta knew very well that he could not see anything more than a few feet from him, and as far as seeing the camp was concerned, there was no use in lighting the match.

If they had known that the scoundrel had been about to light the fuse of a stick of dynamite for the purpose of blowing them into eternity the chances are that it might have gone pretty hard with Tomato Hunker.

But such a thing did not occur to them, as the man seemed altogether too much of an ignoramus for anything like that.

"Who was with you?" asked Wild.

"My pard," was the reply.

"Terrible Riley?"

"Yes."

"Well, what did you motion for him not to come up close to you for?"

"I thought one was enough ter take ther risk of gittin' up so close," lied the man.

"Oh! you did, eh?"

"Yes, that's right, Young Wild West."

Anna and Eloise now appeared on the scene, and then Hop came out.

"Whattée do with um bad Melican man, Misler Wild?" the Chinaman asked.

"Get a rope and tie him," was the reply. "I reckon we'll hold him a while."

Tomato began begging for his liberty.

But our hero, though he did not feel like holding him a prisoner, decided to keep him until Charlie and Jim came back.

He did not have to wait long for this to happen, for a minute or two later footsteps were heard.

Then his two partners came to the camp.

"Couldn't you find him, boys?" asked our hero.

"No," replied the scout, "ther galoot was too smart fur us in ther dark. He fooled us, an' he got away. We hunted around putty well, too."

"Well, we know who he was, anyhow, so that is worth something. Now we will know just what to do when we meet him again. He was Terrible Riley, and this fellow is his pard."

"Jest what I thought," Charlie declared.

"Me, too," added Jim. "There was no one else to think of but those two."

Hop had tied the hands of the prisoner, and as Charlie and Jim came forward and took a look at him, Tomato began pleading again.

Wild thought a moment.

He knew if they were to get away when the rush started they did not want to be bothered with a prisoner. If they turned him over to the authorities of the town but little attention would be paid to him, since there was too much else going on just then.

That meant that the best thing they could do would be to let the villain go, with a warning to keep clear of them in the future.

As far as they knew, he had simply been spying on the camp.

"What is your name, you sneaking coyote?" Wild asked him.

"Hunker," was the reply. "My nickname is Tomato."

"Tomato, eh? Well, that's a fine nickname, I must say. You know what a tomato is, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes!"

"All right, then. If we ever come across you again you will be a tomato with the juice running out. Do you understand?"

"I understand, Young Wild West. You kin bet that I'll never try ter do nothin' ag'in you an' your crowd. If you ketch me at it, jest shoot me, that's all! You're ther Champion Deadshot of ther West, an' I know if yer do take a shot at me it'll be ther last of me. But if you'll let me jine in with them what's goin' fur ther land on ther Comanche Strip I'll be obliged to yer."

"Oh! you can go along with the rush, if you want to. But just see that you don't bother with us, that's all."

"Well, I've jest said that if yer ketch me doin' anything ag'in yer, yer kin shoot me. That's enough, ain't it?"

"Yes, that's enough. Now you can go. You can tell Terrible Riley that he will get his medicine, if he don't look out how he acts. I mean business!"

"I'll tell him. But no matter what he does, I won't interfere with yer, yer kin bet on that! I've had enough."

Wild told Hop to untie him, and when this was done he took the villain by the shoulder, turned him around and gave him a push.

"Light out!" he exclaimed.

Away ran the villain, thanking his stars that he had got off so easily.

Then Wild advised the girls to go back to their tent and get what sleep they could before the sun came up.

He turned in himself, but the scout and Dart decided to remain on guard the balance of the night, though

they all knew that it was not likely they would be bothered again, after what had happened.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE VILLAINS ARE READY FOR THE START.

The instant he heard the voice of Young Wild West call out for his partners Terrible Riley felt a chill shoot down his spinal column.

He turned and fled, as has already been stated, and having such a start, he managed to elude the scout and Dart easily.

He went on around and approached the saloon where the Land Sharks had their headquarters from the opposite side of the town.

A soft knock on the door brought Bob Thompson to it, and he promptly asked:

"Who is there?"

"Me—Riley," was the reply.

The door was unlocked and the villain entered, his face showing up rather white in the glare of the oil lamp the room was lighted with.

Jake Patty was sound asleep on the floor, his coat acting as a pillow, but Herring and Grote had simply been dozing, and they were up as the villainous cowpuncher entered.

"Where's Tomato?" queried Thompson, looking surprised.

"He's in Young Wild West's camp," was the reply.

"What! They didn't catch him, did they?"

"That's jest what they did. An' they come mighty nigh ter catchin' me, too. I had ter run, that was all there was to it. If I hadn't I would have got shot. Young Wild West must have been on ther watch, fur jest as my pard was goin' ter light ther dynamite an' chuck it at ther tents, he jumped on him an' knocked it out of his hand. I seen jest what happened, 'cause Tomato had ther match lit. I was goin' there ter help him when ther boy yelled fur his pards ter come. Then it was no use, I knowed, so I jest legged it as fast as I could. I was mighty 'lucky in keepin' out of their sight, fur I heard 'em putty close to me a couple of times."

Thompson's countenance fell as he listened to the words of the man.

What had appeared to be a sure thing had amounted to an utter failure.

"This is too bad, boys," and he turned to his two companions, who were surely as much disappointed as he was.

"It sartinly is too bad, Bob," Herring declared.

"That boy is altogether too smart fur us—there ain't no use in tryin' ter rub it out," declared Grote, shaking his head. "Jest ter think of it! He was watchin' fur someone ter come, eh?"

"What do yer s'pose they'll do with my pard?" asked Riley, after a pause.

Thompson shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't know," he replied. "But I wouldn't want to be in his boots."

"No, I reckon yer wouldn't," and the cowpuncher

shifted his feet uneasily. "Give me a drink. I feel mighty nervous-like."

There was some left in the bottle, so Grote poured him out a drink.

When he had swallowed the fiery stuff Riley sank into a chair.

"I feel sorry fur Tomato, blamed if I don't!" he exclaimed.

"Well, don't worry about it. Maybe they will let him go," said Thompson.

"What! After they found him tryin' ter kill 'em all with dynamite?"

"Yes, for Young Wild West never shoots anyone without giving them a show, I have heard."

"Well, maybe he'll have him put in ther jail. That would be bad enough, I reckon," spoke up Herring.

"Yes, an' if he was ter tell ther whole thing it would come mighty hard on us all," added Grote.

"Maybe we'd better light out," suggested Terrible Riley.

"Not much!" cried Thompson. "I am not going to let anything stop me from going with the rush, I can tell you. If Tomato does tell why he came there to destroy the camp we can declare that it is not so. Our word will be just as good as anyone's, I think."

They kept on talking it over, and Patty slept on, unconscious of what was going on.

Once Herring tried to rouse him, but it had no effect, any more than to make him turn over, and then drop off again.

It was just about fifteen minutes after Riley came to the back of the saloon when another knock sounded at the door.

Riley pulled a revolver.

"There they come!" he exclaimed in a hoarse whisper. "They must have trailed me here."

The three Land Sharks turned pale.

Thompson promptly put out the light.

Then a voice from outside called out:

"Let me in! I'm Tomato!"

They all recognized his voice, and while Grote struck a match, the leader ran to the door.

He quickly unlocked it, and then Tomato came inside.

The villain had taken care to wait a few minutes before he came to the rear of the saloon, he feeling that it was possible that he would be followed.

When he became satisfied that such was not the case he made for the back entrance to the room the four Land Sharks had engaged.

A sigh of relief went up when the lamp was lighted, and they had a chance to look upon the man, who had been caught by Young Wild West.

"How did yer git way?" Riley asked, eagerly.

"Oh! they let me go, 'cause they thought I was jest sneakin' around ter see what their camp looked like," Tomato replied, as though it had not been of much importance.

"Young Wild West didn't find out what yer was up ter, then?" said Riley.

"No. He knocked ther dynamite out of my hand when he jumped on me, an' he didn't see it. I told him I lit ther match ter give me a chance ter see where I was.

That boy ain't sich a bad feller, after all. He let me go, after I promised him if he ever ketched me interferin' with ther business of him an' his friends ag'in I'd let him shoot me. I made that promise, boys, an' I'm goin' ter stick to it!"

"What!" cried Thompson; "you are going to stick to it? What do you mean to do, anyhow?"

"Jest what I said. I'm goin' ter let Young Wild West alone. If ther rest of yer are goin' ter try an' kill him, go ahead. But I'm done with that game. I won't have nothin' ter say if yer happen ter fix him, but I won't take no part in it. Ther boy was good enough ter let me go, when he could have put me in ther lock-up, or have had me hanged, if he'd wanted ter. I told him that I was goin' ter let him alone, an' I'm goin' ter, too. That don't say that I ain't ther same ter you all as I was afore, does it?"

"It shows that you are turning traitor," declared Thompson, wrathfully.

"It does, eh? Well, I'm ready ter show you that I ain't any more of a traitor than you are!"

Tomato tapped the butt of his gun in a manner that was significant.

"Easy, Tomato," said Terrible Riley. "We don't want no row with these fellers. I reckon you're all right. If you've made up your mind ter let Young Wild West alone, that don't say that we've got ter do ther same thing."

"Of course it don't. But that galoot seems ter think it does. I reckon I'm all right."

Thompson swallowed his wrath.

"So you are going to let the meddlesome boy go over to the Strip, then?" he remarked, looking at Terrible Riley.

Not if I kin help it," was the quick reply. "But s'pose I can't help it, kin you?"

"Well, if I set out to blow him up with dynamite, and had a dark night, like this, to do the job in, I rather think that I would have done the job."

"Oh! that's how yer feel about it, is it? Well, why don't yer go an' try it right now? It ain't likely they'll be expectin' anyone ter show around there ag'in. You're a mighty good one ter scheme, boss; I'd jest like ter see yer carry it out."

But Thompson wanted none of it, as his manner indicated. It was all right to hear him talk, but when it came to putting his ideas into practice he was not there.

He did not keep up the wrangling, however, but invited both the men to remain there, if they had no other place to sleep.

They did not have, so they accepted the invitation.

There was no doubt but that Tomato felt the easiest of the lot, and when he lay down upon the floor at full length he soon dropped off to sleep.

Thompson was about the last to do so, and then it was not a great while before he was aroused by the noise made by the others, who were stirring about the room.

It was broad daylight and the sun was shining through the window, which had partly been covered by a curtain.

The leader of the Land Sharks did not feel anything extra when he got up.

But he made the best of it, however, and going outside,

got some water in a pail he found and proceeded to take a wash.

The rest did the same, and they found lots of others either looking for the same treatment, or indulging in it.

Many had slept out under the shed, while some had not slept at all.

But it was the same way all over the little town. There were no accommodations for them, and they had to make the best of it.

Ten o'clock was the hour appointed for the time to start, and those eligible to hold the land were already on the hustle.

The names had to be given to the land agent, whose quarters were at the camp of the troopers.

But the four Land Sharks had qualified the day before, so there was nothing for them to do but to wait.

The two cowpunchers went and qualified after they got something to eat, and then the six were ready.

"If you're goin' ter kill Young Wild West an' his pards afore ther rush starts I reckon you'd better be git-tin' at it," remarked Tomato, with the vestige of a grin on his bronzed face.

"Leave that ter me, Tomato," Terrible Riley answered. "May be it won't be before ther start; but it'll be afore they git to ther Strip."

"If such a thing happens you'll get an extra hundred," Thompson declared.

CHAPTER IX.

THE START.

Young Wild West and his friends had their breakfast shortly after sunrise that morning.

They could hear the confused sounds made by the eager boomers as they went about the town, shouting and singing, as though they expected to get hold of gold mines, instead of allotments of land.

"Well," said our hero, when they had finished the morning meal, "I reckon we want to be among the first to reach the Strip, girls. That means that Hop and Wing will have to trail along with the stragglers, for the pack-horses won't be able to keep up any kind of a gait. Charlie is eligible to get a number and qualify, so I think he had better go oved to the land agent and do it. We won't hold the piece we take possession of, but it will do for had better go over to the land agent and do it. We won't boom the new town all we can, you know."

"That's right, Wild," answered the scout's wife. "Charlie, why don't you go over and qualify?"

"I reckon I will," was the reply. "Come on, Wild; we'll go right away."

"All right."

The two at once left the camp.

As they got out upon the street they found that it was lined with teams and wagons.

Lumber that was cut and ready to frame constituted about half that the wagons were loaded with, the rest being furniture, bedding and general supplies.

Wild and Charlie took in the scene with no little interest.

There were all sorts of people there, and all seemed to be very much in earnest.

The fact that the Strip was a very fertile piece of ground insured those who were willing to work hard, and had a little money to make a start, a comfortable living, no doubt.

Looks as though a circus had struck ther blamed old town, Wild," observed the scout. "I wish it was a circus; then I could sorter enjoy myself. It's been quite a while since I've seen one."

"Oh! you will enjoy this as well as if it were a circus, before we are through, Charlie," was the reply. "There's lots ahead for us, I reckon."

"Most likely there is. But say! There's an awful lot of people here, Wild."

"A thousand, I should judge."

"Yes; an' that's a good many, ain't it?"

"More than we are in the habit of seeing every day, I think."

"I should say so. Some days we don't see anyone but ourselves. But that's all right. I don't believe in places where there's too many people. It takes nature away too much."

The scout was quite satisfied to live as he always had lived, where the people were few, but plenty of excitement and danger, notwithstanding.

Our hero looked the crowd over as well as he could, and he was certain there were crooks there of all degrees.

He could tell them by their cut, for he had made a study of faces, and he could read a man's character pretty nearly right every time.

"There will be more than one fellow robbed of all he's got before many hours," he said. "That is what one-fourth of them are here for. They don't want the Government land."

"Well, I reckon if I catch any galoot doin' anything in that line he'll mighty quick give it up," and the scout smiled grimly and tapped the butt of his gun.

They went over to the camp, where there were about eighty cavalymen in command of a captain.

There were but a few in line, and Charlie was not long in having himself qualified.

Then, after taking in the scene for nearly an hour they returned to the camp.

All this time they had not seen anything of the four Land Sharks, or Terrible Riley and his partner.

But there was nothing strange in this, as it was quite likely that the villains would keep out of their way.

When they got back to the camp they were treated to a surprise.

"What do you think of that, boys?" Jim Dart said, as he held up a stick of dynamite.

Both knew what it was the moment their eyes rested upon it.

Where did you find that, Jim?" our hero asked, coolly.

"Right in about the very spot where you caught the man with a lighted match last night," was the reply. "Hop found it and he brought it to me, after marking the exact spot."

"Ah! I understand now why the galoot struck the

match. He was going to blow us up. The scoundrel! If I had known that I reckon he would not be at large now. Great Scott! but that was what I call a narrow escape. That little stick of dynamite would have cleaned out the camp, and everything in it, in a hurry!"

"Velly muchee bad mans do lat," said Hop, shaking his head. "Me likee play um tlicks with um fireclackers and cigars with powdee in; but no dynamitee, so be."

"Well," and the scout brought the palms of his hands together hard, "I reckon that galoot has got ter drop ther minute I set eyes on him. He lied, an' that settles his doom."

"No," and the young deadshot turned to him quickly. "He must not be shot, unless he is caught trying to injure us in some way. He told a lie when he said he merely lighted the match in order to see what he was doing; but when I told him we would not bother him, so long as he did not try to interfere with us, I meant what I said, and I want to keep my word. We will let it go just as we intended it should, Charlie. I reckon we can take care of ourselves all right."

"Jest as you say, Wild. But a promise made under sich circumstances, ain't bindin', I don't think."

"Never mind. I have an idea that the man will keep out of our way. He talked in a very earnest way when he declared he would. But there are others who won't, and they are the ones we must be on the watch for."

"Them four what's goin' ter do ther crooked work," said the scout.

"Yes; and Terrible Riley, as he calls himself, too."

"It'll be Dead Riley, instead of Terrible Riley, afore we're done with that galoot, I reckon."

"Quite likely, Charlie."

Wild spoke that way because that was his real opinion.

He had seen just enough of the man to make him believe that he was one who would not stop at any sort of a crime.

The two Chinamen had everything ready save the loading of the pack-horses, and this would be done about fifteen minutes before the time to start arrived.

Nine o'clock, sharp, was the time, and there was to be no delay on account of anyone, or anything.

It was now past eight, so they had not much longer to wait.

Just half-past eight a detachment of forty-eight cavalrymen in charge of Lieutenant Asbury, rode off at top speed.

There were already men in the employ of the land office there, and the cavalry were to assist them in keeping things straight when the boomers began to arrive.

Since this time they have a different way of doing it, but the opening of the Comanche Strip, at the time of which we are writing, was left to be managed by the officials as they saw fit, and they were doing it the way we have described.

It was fair, in one sense of the word, but in another it was not.

Those who had horses that were speedy would get there first, that was certain.

But there was land enough for all, so it would only be a matter of first pick, that was all.

When our friends finally got ready and rode out and

took their places in the long line that spread from one side of the street to the other, they saw the four Land Sharks for the first time.

They were mounted on good-looking horses, and it was evident that they meant to be among the first to get there.

Behind them were Terrible Riley and Tomato, the latter having two loaded pack-mules in charge.

They all looked at our friends as they passed them, and it was easy to see that they were not a little afraid of them, especially Riley.

Wild got in conversation with the captain of the cavalry, whom he knew by sight, and when he had introduced himself he received a cordial greeting.

"What is the name of the new town, captain?" the young deadshot asked.

"That isn't settled yet," was the reply. "I believe the name will be taken from that of the first person who crosses the line. That is quite an idea, isn't it?"

"First rate, captain. But say! If you don't think I am too presumptuous, I'll tell you what the name of the town will be, then."

"Young Wild West?" queried the captain, a twinkle in his eyes, as he looked at the clean-limbed sorrel stallion the boy rode.

"No; the name will be Arietta, for she will be the first to cover the fifteen miles. I will let her ride Spit-fire, and if he don't fetch her over the line first I'll give up making predictions."

"Good! A better name could not be found for it. Go ahead and do it, Young Wild West."

Arietta was delighted at the proposition, and the saddles were soon changed.

She could manage the swift sorrel quite well, and there was no doubt in the minds of her companions that she would win the race.

The girl patted the glossy neck of the splendid animal, and then mounted, Wild taking the white horse she always rode.

At five minutes to nine a volley was fired by the soldiers.

This meant to get ready.

Then, with nerves at the highest tension, the big crowd waited.

It was a peculiar sort of a race, but nevertheless a race.

The honor of getting there first was the prize, too, for the twentieth person there would have as good a pick as the first one.

Though Arietta was not eligible for one of the plots of land, she had been assured that if she got there first the town would be named for her.

Cra-c-c-ck!

The volley meaning that the start was on sounded, and the rush for the Comanche Strip began.

CHAPTER X.

ARIETTA A WINNER.

There was no such a thing as forging ahead when the start was made.

There were easily three hundred mounted men, and probably a score of women and girls ahead of our friends, and the street not being over wide, there was but one thing to do, and that to wait until the line got stretched.

Wild and Arietta rode side by side, and behind them came Charlie and Anna.

A couple of zealous cowboys had pushed in ahead of Jim Dart and Eloise, so they had to wait until the chance afforded them to get out of the bunch.

Only half a mile had to be followed before they would reach a level strip of prairie land, and then the big bunch would spread, as well as stretch.

The vast crowd of riders hung together well until this point was reached, and then our hero, as he saw the chance, called out to his sweetheart:

"Now, Et, follow me to the left. I reckon we may as well get ahead as soon as possible. We are not going to wait and make a spurt at the finish. I'll stick to you as long as I think it is advisable, and when I say 'Go!' I want you to go."

"All right, Wild," was the reply. "I am in this race to win, and I am going to. I know that for a certainty. Spitfire will carry me through all right."

"If he don't carry you through it will be the first time he has ever failed. When you find yourself in the lead just let him have free rein and he will do the rest. Nothing short of a cyclone will overtake him, you can bet!"

They shot off to the left, and in less than a minute they had passed a full dozen of the riders.

But Wild kept on swerving to the left, and in five minutes they were on a line with the leaders, and swinging toward them.

Arietta, her cheeks aglow with excitement and her golden hair streaming in the wind, made a picture that was worthy of an artist's brush.

The white horse was doing nobly, but Wild knew his mettle, and that it was impossible for him to keep up the pace for more than five miles.

But with the sorrel it was different. He could go the whole fifteen miles, and not lose a second.

About a dozen men with mustangs were holding the lead, each fighting to get ahead, and when they saw the boy and girl gradually closing the gap between them they had something else to think about.

Just about when a third of the distance had been covered Wild and Arietta swept past them and took the lead.

"Now then, Et," said the young deadshot, "let yourself go. Give Spitfire his own way about it and he'll take you through. I'll drop back with the bunch here, for I think I can hold the pace they are going at. Go on, and the new town will be named Arietta!"

The girl waved her hand to him, and with a nod of her golden head, she left him.

She had given the sorrel free rein, and he had forged ahead of his own accord.

Wild allowed the mustang riders to come up with him.

"That sorrel is a regular demon, Young Wild West," one of them called out. "How is it that you ain't ridin' him yourself?"

"Because I want the girl to win the race," the young deadshot replied. "The name of the new town will be Arietta."

"Good enough!" shouted one of the others. "Hooray fur Young Wild West's gal!"

They all joined in the shout, and Wild felt pleased at the good feeling shown.

The riders all knew him now, and they seemed to be satisfied to see his sweetheart get to the Strip ahead of the rest.

There was a slight rise about two miles ahead, and before they were at the top of it Arietta had disappeared.

When they did reach the crest she was over half a mile in the lead.

"Boys," said Wild, turning to the riders, "there never was a horse that could catch that sorrel. I say that because I really think so. Just see the lead he has got."

"Kin he hold out ther pace?" asked the man nearest to him.

"Yes. He could win if it was a hundred miles to go. You'll see when you get there."

Wild saw nothing of the rest of his friends during the mad race for the Strip.

When ten miles had been covered Arietta was no longer to be seen, either.

He looked over his shoulder and found that the line stretched as far back as he could see, which told of the difference between the horses that had started in the rush.

A mile further on and some Indians could be seen lined along the side of the trail to watch the arrival of the "paleface legion."

"Paleface maiden heap much go fast!" one of them shouted, as our hero passed. "You no catch!"

"We don't want to catch her, redskin," was the reply. "She is to be the winner."

Ten or twelve minutes later our hero rode in at the head of the bunch that had stuck to him.

There stood Arietta at the finish line with the Government men and the cavalymen, the sorrel nibbling at the grass near her.

A man was just putting the finishing touches to a big white flag, which he had been painting, and as they rode up he raised the staff and the flag floated on the breeze.

The letters on it spelled "Arietta," and when Wild read the word he waved his hat and shouted:

"Three cheers for Arietta!"

The cheer that went up was joined in by those at the line, and blushing the winner waved her handkerchief and bowed.

"She wins by eight minutes," said the official timer. "Wonderful horse, that; and wonderful girl, too."

"That's right," our hero answered. "We don't get no land, but we have the naming of the town, anyhow. That's worth considerable, I reckon."

The qualified ones to get there were so much interested in the girl and horse that they almost forgot to pick their plots.

It was not until they saw others getting close to the goal that they did so.

Wild dismounted and waited with his sweetheart until the rest came up.

They soon came along, and then Charlie selected his plot, and they at once took possession of it.

Then all they had to do was to watch the rest come in.

Pretty soon the four Land Sharks arrived.

Then up came Terrible Riley.

They each took a plot, and then they ran about in various places throughout the Strip and were seen kneeling here and there.

Wild watched them with no little interest.

Finally he walked over to one of the places he had seen them kneeling at.

At first he could see nothing wrong, but he soon discovered that a small stake had been pushed down even with the surface of the ground.

The young deadshot scraped away the dirt with his fingers and pulled up the stake.

There was a piece of white muslin wrapped around it, and as he unwound it he read the following:

"Number 63. Deeded to Robert Thompson for services rendered in the opening of the Comanche Strip."

"I reckon that's pretty good," muttered the boy, as he tucked the stake and muslin under his arm. "Here is one they won't have any fight over, anyhow. Now I know what they were kneeling here and there for. They wanted to make sure that they could find the different plots easily."

He walked back and joined his friends.

"What do you think of that?" he said, as he showed them the muslin containing the inscription.

"Well, if that don't beat all!" declared Arietta. "The villains! They want people to put up houses on the plots, and then they will come around and claim them. Oh! I don't know what ought to be done to them!"

"They'll have somethin' be done ter 'em, all right," answered the scout, his eyes flashing. "I wonder if there's one of them blamed things on this piece?"

"There might be. Let's take a look," suggested Jim.

They all started to look around the piece of land.

Wild saw the corner stakes, and he walked toward one of them.

He noticed that the spot where he had found the little stake was right near one of those that was there for the purpose of designating the size of the plot, and he thought he might find it the same way there.

He was right, too.

There it was, just showing above the ground.

He was not long in pulling it up.

The muslin was wound around it, and when he unfolded it he found that it was the same as the other, only that the plot was numbered 29.

"Here is another one they won't lay claim to, I reckon," our hero said.

Then he waved the little piece of muslin over his head.

The four villains were about three hundred yards distant, but they were looking that way, and they saw what he did.

That they knew what was up our friends felt sure, for they got closer together and appeared to be talking earnestly.

"Just let them come and claim this plot," said Wild. "I reckon they'll find out something. No such galoots as they are will do much swindling here, I'll bet!"

"Not while we're here, anyhow," spoke up the scout.

The people kept on coming, and after what seemed to be a long while Hop and Wing came along with the pack-horses.

Then the camp was quickly put in shape.

CHAPTER XI.

ANOTHER PLOT IS FORMED.

Not only did the Land Sharks know that Young Wild West and his friends had discovered the sunken stake on Cheyenne Charlie's plot of land, but they had seen the young deadshot pull up the stake on the other plot.

It made them feel slightly uneasy, for it really looked as though he knew their game.

But it also made them more determined to rid the world of the boy and his partners.

They had tried hard to get the opportunity, but something turned up to foil them right along.

The fact that Tomato had refused to have any part in the foul scheme made Terrible Riley a little lukewarm, too, and after he got to the new town he became more disposed than ever to take his pard's advice and let our friends alone.

But Thompson and his three partners were rendered desperate when they saw that their foul scheme was likely to be exposed.

"That boy must die!" the leader said, gnashing his teeth. "If he don't we'll have someone after us in a hurry. This is a land fraud game, and though we are only doing it through the assistance of one in the employ of the Government, we will get punished nearly as much as he is, if we are found out."

"There is only one way to do it, as far as I kin think," observed Jake Patty, thoughtfully.

"Tell us how, Jake," said Thompson, brightening up. "Ideas are wanted now, and wanted badly."

"We will have to set a trap for them."

"Good! But how can we do it?"

"If we was ter steal one of them gals it could be done easy enough."

"By jove!" exclaimed Thompson. "That's right. But won't it be jest about as hard to steal one of the girls as it would be to kill the three meddlesome fools?"

"Oh, no!" and Patty shook his head. "If we was ter up an' shoot 'em down when they wasn't lookin' we'd stand no show at all. But by watchin' out putty sharp we ought ter git hold of one of ther gals afore ther day is out. There's goin' ter be lots goin' on here putty soon, an' it ain't likely that they'll keep together all ther time."

"If we do get one of the girls, where are we goin' ter take her?" asked Grote.

"Ter some place where we kin lie in ambush for Young Wild West and his partners, when they come to look for her," answered Thompson. "I suppose that is what Jake means."

"That's right, Bob," and Patty nodded in a pleased way. "You kin understand my thoughts putty well. But if we kin git ther gal without it bein' known who done it, it'll be all ther better. Now, I advise that we pick out

one of 'em, an' that we keep an eye on her, an' when we find that ther chance has come jest grab her an' run off with her. Two of us could do ther job all right. If we could put on wimmen's dress it would be all right, fur then we could fool her, an' git right close to her."

"Disguise is the thing," declared the leader. "Jake, you are certainly showing a very fertile brain to-day. I wouldn't wonder if you have found the way out of the trouble we are in."

"I hope I have," Jake replied. "I don't want ter see ther thing spiled now. It wouldn't do."

"You and I would make pretty good-looking women, I think. We are not so tall as Al and Grote."

"Yes, I reckon that we'll do. All's I want is a good, clean shave, an' then I kin soon fix up. But we've got ter git ther dresses an' things."

"That ought to be pretty easy. The boomers have brought lots of such things, and they are letting them lie around in any kind of fashion. Ah! Hello! There goes the first building up. It's on our property, too! Good! Cheer away, you fools! You are working for us now."

Sure enough, the framework for a house had just been put up, and the crowd around it was cheering itself hoarse.

The lumber had been brought over behind four good horses, and it was the first to arrive.

Many of the men there were carpenters by trade, but those who were not lent a hand and did what they could, and the result was that the first house in Arietta rapidly neared completion.

The window frames were fitted with the sashes, while the doors were ready to hang, and only needed a little shaving-off in places.

Of course it was not a very large building. None of those to be built in a hurry were supposed to be.

But it would have two rooms and an attic that might be used for a sleeping apartment when it was done.

The four villains walked over toward the new building. Terrible Riley and Tomato were already there.

Thompson scowled as he looked at them.

"If we don't look out those fellows will be helping us to get into trouble," he said, in a low tone to his companions. "Tomato has backed down altogether, as you know, and Riley is half inclined to. If they should take a notion to tell that we hired them to blow Young Wild West and his friends to pieces with dynamite, I rather think we would have a slim show of ever leaving this new town alive."

"Oh! they won't tell nothin'," Herring declared. "They ain't turned good, or nothin' like that; it's only because they're afraid of Young Wild West. They think that he can't be got, nohow, an' that he'll git them what tries ter git him. They don't seem ter think that it's a mighty long lane that ain't got no turn, an' that our turn is bound ter come, even if it is a long time comin'."

"Well, if I thought they would tell I'd soon see to it that they dropped out," Patty observed. "I happen ter have a bottle of pizen in my pocket, an' if that was put in a bottle of whisky it wouldn't be no trouble ter fix them galoots."

Thompson nodded.

"You are right, Jake," he said. "Just hold on to that

bottle. I bought that, and I know what it is. It is strychnine, and if a person gets only a little of it in his stomach once it is good-by! But you just hold fast to that. Maybe we won't need it, and maybe we will. Come on! I see a group of redskins over there, and I have just been hit with an idea."

The Indians he referred to were of the vagrant type, and they had simply come there to pick up what they could get.

There were three or four greasy-looking squaws among them, and it was these that had given Thompson his idea.

He thought perhaps they might get what female attire they wanted from them.

But he should have known better, for the squaws were about as poor as they could be, and what they had was barely enough for their own requirements.

"What's your idea, Bob?" Patty asked, as they approached the group.

"We might be able to get the disguises we want of these Indians," was the reply.

"That's very true. But we might do more than that, I reckon. I happen ter know that galoot what looks as though he was a chief. He is Old Man Afraid of a Cow. That's his right name, turned into our language; but no one ever calls him that. Cow is his nickname. You jest wait! You'll see him kinder prick up his ears an' look pleasant when I call out his name."

Thompson nodded, and they went right up to the Indians.

"Hello, Cow!" called out Jake Patty, in a very familiar way. "What are yer doin' around here, with nothin' ter eat?"

Sure enough, the redskin addressed pricked up his ears.

Then he must have recognized Patty, for he hurried to him and put out his hand in a hesitating sort of way.

But when the hand was taken by the white man he said "How?" and looked very much pleased.

"Cow heap much glad to see Jake," he declared. "Jake heap much good paleface. Other palefaces no good! They come and take more of the redman's hunting grounds. No care if poor Injun starve."

"That's right, Cow," and Patty nodded as if he meant it. "But my friends here is jest like me—good palefaces. See?"

"Me see, Jake. You got little toback for poor Injun?"

"Yes, of course I have. But see here, Cow. Maybe you might be able to earn a few dollars, if you'll do ther right thing."

"Injun do anything Jake say," was the quick reply, while the look that shone from his eyes told that he meant it.

"All right. Here's some tobacker. Now we'll walk on till we git ther other side of them trees down there, an' then you kin go around ther other way an' meet us. There might be as much as fifty dollars fur yer, if you'll do jest what we want yer ter."

"Me do anything," and the redskin felt so good over the prospect of getting hold of fifty dollars that he straightened up and banged himself on the breast.

The four Land Sharks moved on.

But they had barely got behind the group of trees when they were met by the Indian.

"He's all right, Bob," said Patty. "You kin hire him ter do anything, an' he wouldn't tell, if he was caught—not if they put him ter torture. Cow is a mighty fine redskin, I kin tell yer."

"All right, then; I'll risk it," answered Thompson.

The fact was that the Indian was one of the sort who would do even worse than murder, if paid for it, and he thought there was no possibility of getting found out.

Thompson talked it over with him, and the result was that Cow agreed to catch the yellow-haired girl and take her to a certain cave back along the wooded ridge, two miles distant, and to hold her there until the four pale-faces came.

He gave them full directions as to where the cave was, and then, after instructing him not to harm the girl in any way, Thompson gave him ten dollars on account, and then left with his three partners.

It was Arietta who had been picked out as the victim, probably because her hair distinguished her from the others.

CHAPTER XII.

HOP GETS A LITTLE INFORMATION.

Our friends could see the first building being put up, but they did not bother to go near it just then.

There was lots to look at, for everything was on a hustle.

The land agent had marked off the plots so that a street ran between them in a straight line. The plots were not very wide, but they extended well back, so farming on a small scale might be done on each one of them.

Young Wild West had seen to it that the tents were put up at the front, or end that was on the proposed street.

This gave them an opportunity to see about what was going on.

The wagons kept coming in, and by noon they were all there, and as many as a dozen buildings were in course of construction.

A man, who must have had considerable influence with the Government officials, came there with a license to sell liquors, and it was just about noon when a sign appeared across the front of a half-built shanty.

It read as follows:

"Licensed Saloon.

Ales, Wines, Liquors, Cigars & Temperance Drinks.

John Mott, Proprietor."

This shanty was located on the opposite side of the street, and perhaps a hundred yards to the left of the camp of our friends, but they could see it from the front.

"I shouldn't think the officials would allow them to sell whisky in a place that is being opened by the Government," said Anna, shaking her head. "How much better it would be if the town was established without such a place in it."

"Well, the population of the town itself are the only

ones to settle that question, Wild answered. "The Government will grant a license to any male citizen, of lawful age, who applies, and puts down the price. That is for wholesale purposes only, however. The town itself can say whether or not it may be retailed in its limits."

"Well, I suppose if the majority voted that it should not be retailed there would be just as much sold. Those who wanted it would buy it by the quart then."

"As sure as guns!" exclaimed Charlie, grinning and shrugging his shoulders. "But what's ther use of tryin' ter put liquor out of business. Ther stuff will be drunk jest as long as they keep makin' it. It ain't so many years ago that there wasn't no tax on it, an' then anybody could rig up a still, if he knowed how an' turn corn or rye inter stuff that would make your hair curl. It was mighty cheap, too. There's only one way ter settle ther liquor question, in my opinion, an' that is fur them what don't want ter drink it ter leave it alone, an' them that does want ter drink it ter go ahead an' do it. That's ther puttiest way ter settle it, I reckon."

"Well, if the women had the say they would soon put a stop to it," his wife declared.

"Maybe they would, gal. But it happens that they ain't got ther say. I likes a little bit of tanglefoot myself, now an' then. But you know I don't drink enough ter hurt me."

"Well, Wild and Jim don't drink any at all, and I think they get along as well as you do."

"Yes, of course they do. But they don't drink it jest because they never did drink it. I was sorter brought up on ther bottle when old Cheyenne was mostly a little village of shanties an' tents. I can't help that, though."

"Of course you can't help it, Charlie."

His wife softened right away, and that ended the argument.

It being noon, Wing was getting the dinner ready.

Our friends had laid in a supply of what they needed before leaving Grizzly Gulch, and with the game they had on hand, both fresh and smoked, they would be all right for a day or two, anyhow.

The chances were that they would not have to look far for the game they would need.

Then there were butchers there, who announced that they had cattle on the way, and that the next day fresh beef would be offered for sale, as well as mutton and pork.

Our friends ate their dinner, and then they decided to take a walk around and watch things.

As we have said, Cheyenne Charlie had no intention of holding the land they occupied.

They were simply going to remain there long enough to prevent the Land Sharks from swindling some of those who were already putting up little houses.

Wild considered it safe to leave the two Chinamen at the camp, so after the noonday meal was over with they started to take a walk around.

But if they thought Hop was going to stay there they were mistaken.

The clever Chinaman simply nodded when Wild told the two of them to look out for things while they were gone.

That did not mean that he was going to remain right there all the time.

He waited until his brother had got the remains of the dinner cleared away, and then after seeing to the horses, he lighted a rather long cigar and left the camp.

As might be expected, he headed for the new saloon, which did not have a roof on it yet.

Hop thought it time to have a little drink, and incidentally a little fun.

He was not a bit afraid of the four Land Sharks, but he did not like to arouse Terrible Riley too much, since he really thought he was a pretty bad sort of a man.

But when Hop started out he was well prepared for anything that might happen.

If he could learn anything that would be of advantage to Wild and his partners he meant to make good use of it.

Hop reached the saloon and found a thirsty crowd there.

Two barrels of ale and a barrel of whisky had been tapped, and the owner of the place and two hired men had all they could do to draw the drinks.

The prices were fifty cents for a glass of whisky, twenty-five cents for ale, the same for cigars, and also for soda pop.

Counting the first cost and the expense of getting it there, the saloonkeeper was making about one hundred per cent. profit.

But he could have got more if he had asked it, for so long as they had money the men were bound to let it fly.

The noise made by the hammers and saws mingled with the shouts and singing of the score of men gathered there for the purpose of drinking and making merry.

When Hop appeared among them he was given a rousing welcome, since the most of them knew him.

Just to keep solid with them, he started in to show them a trick.

He was prepared for it, of course, and when he appeared to swallow the cigar he was smoking, lighted end and all, the crowd became suddenly silent.

Hop placed his hands on his stomach and made a wry face, after he had given what seemed to be the last swallow required to take the cigar down.

"Velly muchee burnee," he declared, making a grimace.

Then he blew a cloud of smoke from his mouth.

This appeared to relieve him, and with a nod of satisfaction, he exclaimed:

"Lat allee light. Me smokee allee samee."

Another cloud of smoke came from his mouth, a vestige of flame with it.

It was only the old trick with tow and the saltpetred piece of string, but no one there dreamed that it was anything but the lighted cigar he had swallowed that caused the smoke to come from his mouth.

"Velly nicee smokee," he said, and then another puff came from his mouth.

"That heathen galoot ain't human!" one man declared, as he moved back a little. "Who ever seen, or heard sich a thing as that? Jest look at him! He's smokin' that cigar, an' it's away down in his stomach."

"Me tly gittee uppee," observed Hop, after he had sent out more of the smoke.

Then he leaned over and made out that he was doing his best to bring the cigar up.

But he was simply taking the tow and burning string

from his mouth, and putting the cigar, which had been up his sleeve since its disappearance, back into his mouth.

Suddenly he straightened up, and there was the cigar in his mouth.

But it was nearly out, and he had to puff hard upon it to get it going right.

"Pletty near makee go outee, so be, when we gittee uppee," he said. "Me velly muchee smartee Chinee, allee samee."

There was no one there who doubted the truthfulness of the assertion.

Hop had showed that he was just what he said.

"Me likee havee lillee dlink of tanglefoot now," he observed, as he pushed his way to the board that was upon barrels to form a bar. "Me allee samee velly muchee dly."

Then it was that a dozen or more offered to treat him.

The result was that Hop got going pretty well, and if he kept it up for an hour or so he would surely be much the worse for wear.

But something happened that caused him to make up his mind not to keep it up.

The man called Tomato came in, and getting up close to him, whispered in his ear:

"Tell Young Wild West that Bob Thompson is puttin' up a job ter steal one of ther gals from your camp. I don't believe in anything like that, an' I made up my mind ter give warnin' of it."

Hop nodded, and then invited the man to drink.

Tomato was glad to do this, as might be supposed.

Hop soon slipped out of the place and went in search of our friends.

He believed that the man had told him the truth, and he wanted Wild and the rest to know about it as soon as possible.

CHAPTER XIII.

WILD LEARNS OF THE LAND SHARKS' FOUL SCHEME.

Wild had not walked very far with his friends when the cavalry captain and two men, attired in a sort of uniform, came up and accosted him.

"You are Young Wild West, the famous deadshot, are you not?" said the captain.

"At your service, captain," our hero answered, bowing and giving the military salute.

"Well, if you feel that you want to be of service to the people, who have come here to form this town, and stay here to make honest livings, you can do so."

"Tell me how and I will only be too glad to do it."

"Well, Mr. Dempsey here has suggested that if you allowed your name to be used in connection with a big sign we are going to put up this afternoon at Grizzly Junction it would help a lot. He thinks it would induce a lot to come here and settle if they knew that you were booming the town, and that it was named for your sweetheart."

"All right," said Wild. "Go ahead and put it on the sign, if you want to. I am going to boom the town, and no mistake. But the first thing I mean to do is to thin

out the crooks who are here. By doing this someone in the service may be pretty hard hit; but I can't help that. A crook is a crook, whether he is in the employ of the Government or not. I happened to hear of something that was going on, you know, and I made up my mind to stop it. I don't like to see anyone swindled out of their hard-earned money."

The official Dempsey got interested right away.

"I should like to have a talk with you in private, Young Wild West," he said. "Harris, you go ahead and do the advertising. I understand that the big sign can be finished within a couple of hours. All that was needed to put on it was the name of the town; but now we will add to it that Young Wild West is booming it. Ride over to the Junction at once."

The other official bowed and promptly went off to obey the instructions given him by his superior.

Wild soon found that Dempsey was the man in charge, and when he walked over to a pile of lumber and sat down with him he was not long in convincing himself that he was a straightforward man, true to the service.

"Now then, if you wish to tell me what you have learned, you may do so, my boy," he said, placing his hand on our hero's shoulder. "I have heard much about you, and I assure you that I am a great admirer of you. You are an American, first, last and all the time; and your belief in the right, and your wonderful skill and courage have made you something above the average pioneers of the West. Do you think it advisable to tell me what you have learned?"

"Nothing would stop me from telling you now, Mr. Dempsey, for the big bouquet you have thrown at me has almost drowned me with the perfume."

Wild laughed, and so did the official.

"But to be serious," our hero went on to say, "I reckon I'll tell you all about it, providing you let me do the work of catching the crooks."

"Can you do it without assistance?"

"Oh, yes, Mr. Dempsey! All the assistance I want is that which my partners and the girls and two Chinamen we have with us can give me. Just leave it to me. We will land them all right."

"Very well, then, I promise you that you will be allowed to go ahead as you see fit."

"Good! Now, to begin with, what do you think of this?"

Wild showed him the piece of muslin that had been under the ground, wound about the stake he had pulled up on the property Cheyenne Charlie had laid claim to.

Dempsey opened wide his eyes and gave a low whistle of astonishment.

"What does this mean?" he gasped. "There is not one bit of land that has been deeded in the whole town site."

Then Wild started in and told him all he knew about the scheme the four land sharks had, and also that they had said that one of those in the Government employ had made it possible for them to work the scheme.

Dempsey listened, the expression of his countenance changing now and then.

But he was quite calm when our hero had concluded his story.

Those four men ought to be seized right away and placed under guard," he said. "But I have promised to let you go ahead, and I will keep the promise. I suppose you want the pleasure of catching them red-handed."

"Yes, that is about the size of it, especially as I happen to know that they want my life. It was surely through them that the villain named Tomato tried to kill us all with dynamite, for he would hardly have thought of such a thing himself."

"Well, go ahead. I hope they try their game soon, for I feel that I can hardly wait. I was going back to the Junction to-night. But I think I had better stay here, and keep the forty-eight cavalymen here, too, until this thing is over."

"Well, you might give it out that you are going to-night, and then you can go away a mile or so and go into camp. That will make them start in to-morrow morning, probably."

"A good idea. I will act upon it."

"Say, Mr. Dempsey?"

"What is it, Mr. West?"

"Don't bother about calling me Mr. West," Wild answered, quickly. "I am only a boy, and it is not right for a man, especially a high official, like you, to 'mister' me."

"What shall I call you, then?"

"Wild."

"Very well, Wild. Suppose you call me Commissioner, then? That is my title."

"All right, Commissioner. Now then, I am going to be bold enough to ask you a question."

"Proceed, Wild."

"Have you any idea as to who the guilty party is—the one who has aided the four Land Sharks to work their scheme, I mean?"

"Yes, I have an idea."

"But you don't feel like telling me, I suppose?"

"Well, it would do no good, since he is not here, or even at the Junction. He is now easily a hundred miles from here, on his way to look up some land frauds in another part of the country."

"Ah! I see."

"I don't mind telling you that the man I have under suspicion is named Trainor. I might be mistaken; but, anyhow, I shall see to it that he is ordered to come here."

"Well, by the time he gets here I reckon the town will be straightened out pretty well."

"I hope so."

"And if he is the guilty party he will simply be walking into the net that will hold him a prisoner."

"Exactly."

"It being understood now, the two turned and walked back to where Wild's friends were awaiting them.

They found that the party had increased one.

Hop Wah was there.

The Chinaman had found them, and had been waiting until Wild came back.

Then he quickly told our hero what Tomato had whispered to him at the saloon.

The young deadshot was not much surprised at hearing that Arietta was marked to be stolen, but he was when he heard that the information came from the villain, who

had come so near bowling them all into eternity the night before.

He did not doubt Hop in the least, and that meant that the man had surely imparted the information.

Such being the case, Tomato must have changed his mind and was now a friend, instead of an enemy.

But he had told Wild that he might shoot him dead in his tracks if he caught him interfering with them, and it now looked as though he had meant that he would not again go against them.

"Hop," said Wild, after he had thought a moment, "you go and find out from the man just what the four villains mean to do to carry out their scheme. Tell him that I say he must tell you all he knows about it."

"Allee light, Misler Wild."

Hop started off to find Tomato.

He found him at the saloon, and with him was Terrible Riley and Herring, one of the crooks in the land business.

"Hello, you smart heathen!" called out Riley, who was fast getting under the influence of whisky. "I reckon you're all right. You kin take a drink with me, an' welcome. I don't bear you no grudge, an' I ain't got nothin' ag'in your boss, even if he did give me a good wallop in yisterday. Come right on!"

Hop smiled and came up to them.

He noticed that Herring looked daggers at Riley, too, but he did not appear to notice anything but the invitation.

He drank with them, but it was very little of the liquor that went down his throat.

The clever Chinaman felt that he had important business on hand, and he knew very well that he had taken all that was good for him already.

His experience with the kind of men he was associating with just then made him believe that Terrible Riley meant what he had said, and the fact that the Land Shark had looked at him with disapproval bore this out.

He treated them all, and then he said to Tomato:

"You wantee play lillee game dlaw pokee?"

"You bet!" was the reply.

"So do I," spoke up Riley.

"I'll take a hand, too," Herring chimed in.

"Me wantee talkee with Misler Tomato allee samee first," Hop told them.

He got the man aside, and then he put it to him good and strong.

"I've been thinkin' of turnin' over a new leaf ever since Young Wild West let me go last night," Tomato said, shrugging his shoulders. "Ther more I have thought about it the more I feel like doin' it. That's why I told yer what I did. I've got a piece of land here, an' it may be that I kin settle down on it an' be somethin' better than what I have been in ther past."

"Lat velly goodee, Misler Tomato," Hop said, smiling, blandly. "But Young Wild West allee samee knowee what um gamee is. You tellee me, so be."

"Well, I will, then. Thompson has hired an Injun ter ketch ther gal, an' he's goin' ter take her back that way to a cave. Then when Young Wild West an' his pards gits on her trail, an' they git putty nigh to ther cave, they're ter be shot down from behind ther trees an' bushes. It's a game that I couldn't bring myself ter take

part in, though I've promised ter help 'em do it. I had ter promise, or I s'pose Thompson would be puttin' up a job ter kill me. An' say, Hop! Riley ain't goin' ter stick, either. He's been listenin' ter my argument a whole lot, an' he's goin' ter turn over a new leaf, too. Jest tell Young Wild West that, will yer. Tell him that we're awful glad I didn't git ther chance ter set off that stick of dynamite last night. I'm talkin' right from ther heart, Hop. Yer kin believe me."

"Me believee you, so be. You be goodee man, Misler Tomato. Better be goodee lan bad, so be."

"I know it now; but I was a good while learnin' ter think that way."

Hop made him tell the scheme again, so he would be sure not to make a mistake, and then he left him.

The Chinaman was not long in finding our hero, and soon they all knew of what was up.

"Well," said Wild, "I reckon we'll fool them. We will wait until to-morrow morning, and then Arietta will go out and let the redskin catch her."

"What!" exclaimed Arietta.

"That's all right," was the reply. "But they won't hold you very long. Have no fear of that. I am going to think up a scheme that will make them think they have won out, when it will be just the other way."

No one said any more, for they all knew that he was capable of doing it.

As the sun was getting down close to the distant range in the West it was announced that the cavalrymen were going back to Grizzly Junction, as everything was now in good shape, and they would not be needed.

This no doubt pleased the Land Sharks greatly.

Since the arrival of the boomers over twenty little shanties were nearly completed. It was wonderful to see how quick a town could be made.

The store was open and doing business and the saloon had the roof on it, and had taken in more than enough to pay for the entire cost of building it.

It soon leaked out that Young Wild West was there to boom the town, though, as the reader knows, he had not come there for that purpose.

But since he had been asked to do it, he was going to do all he could in that direction.

Nearly all the crooks who had followed the boomers had given it up, for they had been watched so closely by the cavalrymen and cowboys that they had feared to go ahead and do any wholesale robbing.

What they got did not amount to a great deal, and others gladly made up a purse for those who had been relieved of what they had.

On the whole, the town of Arietta was starting off nicely.

CHAPTER XIV.

PLOTTING AGAINST PLOTTERS.

After supper was over Wild called Hop aside and said:

"I want you to rig up three dummies to look something like Charlie, Jim and I. I am going to make the

villains, who are plotting against us, believe that they kill us. Do you understand?"

"Me undelstand, Misler Wild," answered the Chinaman, who really possessed more than average intelligence, as the reader knows.

"Our old coats and hats will be enough in the line of clothes, I reckon. You fix them up, Hop. We will want to use them the first thing in the morning—before the Land Sharks are up, in fact."

"Allee light, Misler Wild; me fixee."

That evening our friends were not long in spotting the Indian, who was to do the kidnapping act when he got the chance.

When it had got dark Hop suggested that he go and find Tomato and have another talk with him.

"All right; go ahead," said Wild. "You might tell him that he can tell the gang he has learned that Arietta, Anna and Eloise are going out to shoot some game in the morning, right after breakfast, and that no one is going with them. He can say that he heard them talking about it, you know."

"Allee light, Misler Wild. Me undelstand."

"You can tell Tomato that if he expects to make himself solid with us he must do something to help us. Maybe he might be able to take the cartridges from the gun the Indian has. Then Arietta would soon make him the prisoner."

The clever Chinaman grinned.

"Lat be allee light," he said. "Me fixee. Tomato allee samee allee light, and so Tellible Liley allee light. Ley be velly muchee bad, but now ley be allee samee goodee."

Hop meant just what he said, too.

He was right in luck, too, for in less than ten minutes he met Tomato and Riley.

"How about that poker game, Hop?" Riley asked.

"Me no play to-night; me play allee samee plenty to-morrow, so be."

"All right. I know why yer said it. Tomato has told me all about it. Say! Ain't there somethin' I kin do ter help out in this case? I want ter prove ter Young Wild West that I'm goin' ter be straight hereafter."

"Me tellee whatee you do. You go 'long by our campee, and you stay lere lilee while. Len you go to um Land Sharkees and allee samee say you hear lat um thlee Melican girls allee samee go outee to-morrow morning, light attee bleakfast, to shootee um deer and plenty birds. You say you hear muchee talkee 'boutee, and lat ley go allee samee alone. Len ley sendee um bad ledskin to catchee um girl, and he allee samee catchee, savey?"

"I don't quite understand."

But Hop soon made him understand, though he did not deem it advisable to let him know the rest of the scheme.

Hop went around with them a little while, and then returned to the camp.

Then he went at work on the three dummies that were to represent Young Wild West and his partners.

It took him until nearly midnight to complete them, but when he had finished the job it was voted that no one but him could have done it so well.

The night passed in a rather noisy fashion, for the sounds of hammers never once ceased.

"Now, girls, you had better get ready to go out and meet that redskin," said Wild, after breakfast had been eaten. "When he comes up and begins to talk to you, which he will surely do, just let him go right ahead. If he points a gun at you, make out that you are badly frightened, and then watch your chance to get the best of him. I reckon that's the best way to fix it. When you do get the best of him tie him up to some tree. Gag him so he can't make an outcry, too. Then Arietta will stay in hiding near him, and the two of you can come running to the camp and shout to us that Arietta has been carried off by a redskin. We will start right out as though on the trail, and then the four villains will take a few shots at us—or something that looks like us. We put the dummies in position just as it was beginning to grow light, you know."

The girls nodded and laughed, for they never once thought there was going to be anything dangerous about it.

Wild and Charlie, with the assistance of Hop, had carried the dummies to a clump of woods half a mile from the camp and laid them behind trees. There were lariats attached to each, and thrown over limbs above, and to these another was tied, so that a pull upon it would cause all three to rise at the one time.

Our friends meant to be right there, and when the dummies arose they were going to yell at the top of their voices for Arietta.

In case the Land Sharks fired they would let the dummies drop to the ground.

That would make them think that it was all over.

It was surely a case of plotting against plotters.

CHAPTER XV.

THE VILLAINS ARE READY.

Though both Riley and Tomato were playing deceitful parts, they did not feel that they were doing wrong.

Riley told that he had heard that the girls were going hunting the next morning, and it was decided that Cow, the redskin, should wait until then to catch the golden-haired girl and make her a prisoner in the cave.

Tomato got on very friendly terms with Cow, and he was not long in getting hold of the weapons he had.

They consisted of a knife with a buckhorn handle and an old cavalry six-shooter that had to be loaded with powder and ball.

Tomato got hold of the six-shooter and with slivers from a match he plugged every tube and put the caps back on them.

Late that night the seven who were supposed to be all against Young Wild West, met.

"Well," said Bob Thompson, looking them over, "how are things getting on, boys?"

"Everything is all right, but one thing, I reckon," answered Herring. "I don't quite like ther idea of Riley and Tomato bein' so thick with Young Wild West's Clever Chinee, as they calls him."

"We jest do that ter learn what we kin," spoke up Riley. "Ain't we done our share of ther work?"

"Of course we have," spoke up Tomato. "Jest because we've said we ain't goin' ter lift a hand ag'in Young Wild West don't say that we ain't goin' ter help fix things so

someone else kin do it. It's jest a matter of principle, that's all."

Thompson laughed heartily.

"I know what you mean, Riley. You're more afraid of Young Wild West than anything else. That's why you've given up the idea of getting revenge for the way he walloped you yesterday."

"Well, maybe that's it. I won't say as it ain't."

"We're all right, anyhow, so let it go at that," Tomato declared. "We'll stick to yer, an' no one will ever know anything about it."

"Maybe Injun get in trouble," suggested the redskin.

"No, you won't," Thompson assured him. "As soon as you get the girl to the cave you can leave her there, and then come back here. You want to make yourself look like some other Indian; not keep as you are now. You mustn't let the girls recognize you. Make out that you are the big chief of a band of Indians who are on the warpath. You can do that, can't you?"

"Oh, yes; me do that."

"All right, then. Now, boys, we will be watching, and when we see Young Wild West and his two partners start out to find the lost girl we will simply start after them. I think that will be the best way. We will follow them up until we get the good chance we are looking for, and then we'll leg it back here for all we worth."

"Not before you shoot 'em, I reckon," said Patty.

"No, of course not. You know well enough what I meant."

"All right, Bob. Then we'll come back an'—"

"Open up our game right away. There are just eleven good-sized houses built on our property now. We'll have everything our own way, for the Government men have gone, and there will be no one to interfere."

The villains had camped on one of the plots, the outfit having been brought over by Tomato, and after they had made it very plain to the redskin what was to be done in the morning, he was dismissed, and then the others turned in.

When morning came Bob Thompson was the first one up.

He took a walk past the camp of Young Wild West and found them eating their breakfast.

"I wonder if the redskin is ready?" he muttered. "If he isn't, he should be. If the girls are going out hunting as soon as they are through their breakfast it will be only a few minutes before they make the start."

He went on a little further, and then he had the satisfaction of seeing an Indian walking through the little patch of woods.

Though disguised with war-paint and trimmings, Thompson knew it was Cow.

"Now I'll go back, so we can be ready for the biggest piece of work I ever took part in," thought the villain. "But it is money and success, or defeat and death. Young Wild West and his pards must die, or we will!"

CHAPTER XVI.

CONCLUSION.

The girls set out with their rifles, while Wild and his partners remained at the camp, apparently taking things easy.

When the girls had been gone about fifteen minutes a rifle shot sounded in the direction they set out.

"There goes something in the line of game," said Jim Dart, giving a nod.

"Yes, that's right," Charlie spoke up. "It's game all right, even if it was nothin' more than that dirty redskin. Maybe Arietta has shot him. I hope she has."

But let us see just where Arietta, Anna and Eloise were, and what they were doing.

It was a covey of partridges that had caused the shot to be fired, and, as might be supposed, Arietta was the one who fired it.

It was really a remarkable shot, too, for she managed to get aim at two birds in a line and brought down both of them, with a rifle, too!

But Anna and Eloise did not get a shot, as the brush-wood was just high enough for the partridges to escape.

They found the two that had dropped, and then they decided to be more careful, for they knew very well that the shot would fetch the Indian pretty quickly.

They were right in this expectation, for in less than three minutes they heard footsteps, and then a painted redskin appeared.

He came toward them, making motions to signify that he did not mean to harm them, but he was so ridiculous in appearance—he having overdone the disguising part—that Arietta laughed outright.

"Paleface maiden heap much laugh," grunted the Indian, who bore the high-sounding name of Old Man Afraid of a Cow. "She give Injun her gun."

"What do you want the gun for?" the brave girl asked, a smile lingering on her face.

"Injun want gun to go on warpath," was the reply.

"Well, I guess you had better not go on the warpath. You'll only get shot if you do. There are too many pale-faces around for that."

"Injun chief got plenty braves in the woods; they thick as the leaves on the trees," lied the red villain.

"Is that so? You had better call them, then. Maybe you want to take the paleface girls and make them your squaws."

Cow showed signs of uneasiness.

He did not like the way the girl talked.

Arietta held her rifle with the muzzle pointing toward the ground, but when he took a step toward her she raised it so it was leveled at his breast.

"Ugh!" he said, when he noticed this.

"What is the matter, noble chief? Are you afraid you will get shot?"

The girl spoke in such a careless way that Cow began to wish he was anywhere but just there.

She lowered the rifle again, and then the redskin suddenly drew his revolver and pointed it at her.

Then Anna, who had been waiting to do something, suddenly used her rifle for a club and struck the weapon from his hand.

Arietta quickly covered his heart, and then she said:

"Put your hands behind you."

There was no mistaking her meaning, so he quickly obeyed.

"Tie him, Eloise. Make a good job of it, too."

Then Arietta coolly stepped to him, and when she had

strengthened the bonds that held him helpless she coolly led him to a tree and tied him to it.

"Go on back to the camp and do your part, girls," she said to Anna and Eloise. "This is what I call a regular farce, and it really makes me feel ashamed to do it. It is too easy for anything."

The two girls smiled, and then hastened for the camp.

When they got there they made out that they were very much excited.

Wild, Jim and Charlie instantly grabbed their rifles and hurried for the spot where the dummies had been fixed.

They had scarcely gone when the four Land Sharks started after them.

A few minutes later they heard the three shouting at the top of their voices, and then they made for the spot.

The dummies were in position, and being close enough to make a sure thing of it, they opened fire.

Down went the dummies, Charlie uttering something that sounded very much like a death-yell at the same time.

Elated, and afraid at the same time, the four turned and fled.

They reached the town in quick order, and Thompson decided to start in at once and show his authority.

He led the way to the largest of the houses that had been erected on one of the plots that he held a forged deed for.

Besides his partners in the game, Riley and Tomato went with him.

The owner was right there, and when Thompson told him that he had built on property that did not belong to him there was a very heated argument for a couple of minutes.

The man wilted when he saw the forged deed, for it looked to be better than anything he held, and the number and location corresponded exactly.

But to convince him still further, Jake Patty went and pulled up the stake that was in a corner of the plot.

Then it was that the boomer became sick at heart and turned away, declaring that the opening of the Comanche Strip was a rank fraud.

But bent on winning out from the others they expected to deal with, the villains started in to tear down the building.

Meanwhile, Hop Wah had seen what was going on, and he got the horses of our hero and his partners, and mounting one of them, led the others, to find their owners.

He met Arietta, who had left the Indian in charge of our hero, and was hurrying to the camp, so she might be the first to appear before the astonished villains.

It happened that the house that was being torn down by them was but a short distance from the camp, and when the girl saw what was going on she decided to give them a surprise.

She waited until she heard the clatter of hoofs near at hand, and then the brave girl told Anna and Eloise to hurry her lover and his partners to the scene the moment they came up.

"They are coming!" said the scout's wife, pointing to the right.

Arietta saw Wild and his partners riding swiftly to the scene, and she ran from the camp and called out:

"Stop that, you scoundrel! You have overstepped the line!"

Thompson, who had a hammer in his hand, turned at the sound of the girl's voice.

He did not recognize her at first, and shouted for her to get out of the way.

But Arietta did not scare for a cent.

"You have overstepped the line, I say," she repeated.

"Up with your hands, you scoundrels!" cried our hero, as he halted so close to Thompson that the sorrel nearly knocked the villain over.

Riley and Tomato quickly ran over to where Arietta was standing.

Then the four Land Sharks began to understand.

Up went their hands.

By this time a big crowd had gathered about the spot.

"Disarm those four scoundrels and tie them," said Wild.

In a very few minutes the Land Sharks were bound and standing in line.

Then Young Wild West got upon a barrel and addressed the crowd, giving them the full particulars of the plotting of the Land Sharks, from start to finish.

"When I started for this place it was not for the purpose of booming the town; but since the Land Sharks have been cleaned up, and the town has been named for my sweetheart, I reckon I'll do some booming. The first thing you folks should do now is to elect a justice, so the four galoots can be tried. The redskin in the game is tied to a tree half a mile back in the woods. Get your judge, and then give them a show. But it is all one-sided, for they have been caught red-handed."

The reader can guess what happened to the Land Sharks.

The cavalymen came up about an hour later, and when they did the four men were hanging to a stout limb, side by side.

Cow, the Indian, would have got the same dose, but the cavalry arrived in time to save him.

Our friends remained at Arietta nearly a week, and in that time Young Wild West did nothing but boom the town.

THE END.

Read "YOUNG WILD WEST SAVING A RANCH; or, THE FIRE FIENDS OF THE BAR-X RANGE," which will be the next number (347) of "Wild West Weekly."

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WILD WEST WEEKLY

NEW YORK, JUNE 4, 1909.

Terms to Subscribers.

Single Copies.....	.05 Cents
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One Copy One Year.....	2.50

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SOME GOOD ARTICLES.

A boy named Charles Raymond, living near Raleigh, North Carolina, broke a pitcher, and his father gave him a good whipping for it. Charles went to bed and dreamed that a mule lost by his father could be found in a certain place. In the morning he told his father about it, and after a walk of eleven miles the mule was found. If the boys of America received more lickings they would dream more, and thus we should find more lost things. Every father should go to work at once.

There is a sign in zoological gardens of Paris to the effect that no one looking at the animals must open an umbrella. In fact, the attendants will not let a person carry an umbrella into any of the animal houses if they happen to see it. Twenty years ago a boy happened to raise an umbrella in the tiger-house, and the tigers went almost mad over it, and two of them broke the bars of their cages and got out. The same thing also affects lions and elephants. Why it does can't be explained, but if you do it, look out for a row. Perhaps the beasts think that a thunder shower is coming.

The British Consul at Chicago has made a report to his government concerning the whaling industry carried on by Newfoundland fishermen. They have been attempting to make whale leather a commercial product, and are said to be meeting with some success. The average whale-hide covers a surface of about fifteen hundred square feet. A square foot of the hide weighs from two to five ounces, and is priced as high as fifty cents. The leather is very tough, and is said to have great wearing qualities, and may therefore be adapted to the covering of furniture, buggy-tops and seats, and also automobile uses. It is also claimed that it can be used for boots and shoes. Leather made from the intestines of the whale resembles kid, and is very thin and tough. It will take color readily, and is to be offered to glove-manufacturers for making the long-sleeved gloves now worn by women.

A French horticulturist, in studying the physiology of the vegetable kingdom, conceived that the smallness of certain plants—the violet, for example—was owing to an atmospheric pressure too great for its delicate organs. Having carefully resolved this idea into form, he determined to test the correctness of it by some satisfactory experiment. After not a little calculation, he at last hit upon the possible and probably only means by which he might illustrate his new theory. He prepared a small balloon of as light material as was consistent with the necessary quality of durability, and this he

made perfectly tight, so as to prevent the escape of any gas with which he filled it. To this he attached a strong silken cord twelve hundred meters long, or, say, four thousand feet. Attached to the balloon, in place of a basket, was a pot of earth, in which were planted Parma violets just springing from the root. The result has been wonderful. In the thin air which the delicate violets breathed at that height—for flowers do breathe in their own delicate way—they thrived marvelously, the blossoms enlarging to five times the size attained at the level of the earth's surface. This beautiful experiment, after about two months of judicious trial, rewarded the ingenious and scientific horticulturist by presenting him with violets as large as Bengal roses, something probably never before seen on earth. The idea naturally suggests itself of sending up some of our human baby violets. Might not our children be thus transformed into giants?

GRINS AND CHUCKLES.

"They seem to live happily together." "Yes; he lets his wife select his neckties and his stenographers."

Peggy—Was that policeman ever a little baby, mother? Mother—Why, yes, dear. Peggy (thoughtfully)—I don't b'lieve I've ever seen a baby policeman."

"I pay as I go," declared the pompous citizen. "Not while I'm running these apartments," declared the janitor. "You'll pay as you move in."

"I am sorry to hear, Capt. Salter, that your wife left you so unceremoniously." "My mistake, sir. I took her for a mate, and she proved to be a skipper."

Patient—Doctor, what do you call this fever of mine? Doctor (looking at clinical thermometer)—Well, I'd call it a bargain—103 reduced to 98.

Hook—They say that famous marine artist was once a plain farmer's boy. I wonder where he developed his talent. Cook—Probably drawing water down on the farm.

Mother—Frances, don't tease. You know mother does not like her little girl to eat between meals. Frances (aged three)—Mother, this isn't between meals. It's before meals.

"Your son," said the professor, "has been laboring under a misapprehension." "What?" exclaimed the humble but honest parent, with joy in his voice. "Ye don't meant it!" "Mean what?" "That Josiah has been workin'."

"Have you ever seen an effort to prohibit betting?" "Yes," answered the turfman. "The legislature out in my state tried it." "And what was the result?" "The bookmakers went to betting on whether or not the law could be enforced."

The old housekeeper met the master at the door on his arrival home. "If you please, sir," she said, "the cat has had chickens." "Nonsense, Mary," laughed he; "you mean kittens. Cats don't have chickens." "Was them chickens or kittens as you brought home last night?" asked the old woman. "Why, they were chickens, of course." "Just so, sir," replied Mary, with a twinkle. "Well, the cat's had 'em!"

TIGER-HEART

By KIT CLYDE.

The following story, while it does not follow the line of my uncle's usual experiences, varied as they were, nevertheless illustrates a phase of insanity as rare as it is extraordinary.

The events related did not happen to him, nor did they come under his notice, except in the manner related below; but as I find the narrative among his papers, I conclude that he attached importance to it, as bearing upon the strange, and, sometimes, comprehensive malady of insanity, or he would not have preserved it.

It happened that my finding it was not altogether in the common run.

I was fumbling around his ancient desk, bequeathed to me with all its contents, when somehow or another I chanced upon a secret compartment, hitherto unknown to me.

In here I found a number of papers, this among the rest, all showing signs of age, and subscribed as follows:

"Not in my own experience, but interesting."

With the other papers found in this hidden receptacle I may have to deal at some future day; for the present I will content myself with this one.

It had a separate endorsement, which showed me how it chanced to come into my uncle's possession.

He was sitting in his office one night, busily reflecting.

His reflections consisted mostly in seeing how he could keep cool.

The night was intensely hot and sultry, a distressing, fever-inspiring night, not a breath of air stirring, and the least exertion seeming to take all the life out of one.

Suddenly someone entered.

It was the old friend of whom I have spoken more than once, he who usually came to the old gentleman for a story.

"How do you do?" said my uncle. "You surely don't expect me to tell you a story to-night? I can scarcely breathe."

"No. I have come to tell you one."

"Tell me a story?"

"Certainly."

"Nonsense; you never did such a thing in all your life."

"Then it's time I made a beginning."

"Very well; but wake me up if I fall asleep."

"There will be no danger of that."

"Why not?"

"The story contains insanity, and a strange kind, too. I saw the subject myself, and I'll vouch for the truth of everything I tell you. He's dead now, to be sure, passed away just before I left for home."

He had been in a distant part of the country and had only just returned, but before seeing anyone he had come to my uncle in order to lay this story before him.

Without further ado he began, and I will add that my uncle remained awake during the whole of the tale, which he called:

A STRANGE MADNESS.

There have been cases where people, bitten by rabid animals, have not shown symptoms of hydrophobia for years after the event, and then, of a sudden, when the cause has been well nigh forgotten, they have died in great agony and for no other reason.

Dogs are not the only animals whose bite will cause this dire disease, always fatal, for the bites of cats, foxes and other animals have been known to produce it.

It was never known, in the case which follows, whether

Dugald Duncan's madness and death could be attributed to such a cause or not.

The man was certainly mad beyond a doubt, and insanity had never been known in his family, nor had he shown any signs of it before the fatal night on which his madness showed itself.

The bite did not cause the ordinary hydrophobia as known to physicians, for he did not die in agony, but instead it made him insane, and that is the only explanation that can be put upon it.

The man was part owner of an extensive menagerie which, during the winter, was stabled in an old stone barn built for that very purpose.

There were lions, tigers, hyenas, elephants and other animals, some of them very rare and curious, the whole collection being worth several hundred thousand dollars.

There was one particularly large specimen of the royal Bengal tiger, an enormous brute, of great strength and beauty, the finest ever exhibited.

The proprietors were justly proud of this creature, but he was almost unmanageable and had caused no end of trouble.

One night he was reported to have escaped.

He had broken through his cage, and was thought to be wandering somewhere in the cellar of the barn.

It would not do to have him prowling around in that fashion, and as soon as Dugald heard the report he made up his mind to capture the beast.

He led the party himself, and was the first to enter the cellar, one of the stable boys, in a blouse and rough cap, carrying an old-fashioned lamp in his hand, holding it above his head in order that it might give more light.

Suddenly, without a sound of warning, the huge beast sprang toward the boy from some place of concealment in the cellar.

The light showed up every line and muscle in his body, and the sight of his blood-red mouth with its white fangs and lolling tongue, was something appalling.

The boy uttered a cry of horror and retreated.

The savage brute was upon him, however, and he was thrown to the ground, the animal making his formidable teeth meet in his quivering flesh.

The lamp fell from the boy's hand and the place was in utter darkness, the remainder of the party not having arrived as yet.

Dugald bounded forward and seized the monster by the throat.

"Ho, there! light and a rope," he shouted, nearly strangling the beast with his strong arms.

He had worn a heavy cloak, and this he threw off as he rushed forward and cast it over the tiger's head, tightening his hold every second.

The struggle was short but severe, the animal making frantic efforts to escape, and only getting more and more entangled in the voluminous folds of the cloak.

It was scarcely a minute before the rest of the party arrived with the lights and a large quantity of stout rope.

The animal was quickly secured, under their united efforts, and put into a cage which there was no probability of his breaking.

The poor boy was found to be terribly lacerated, his shoulder being laid bare to the bone, and his throat horribly bitten and torn.

He suffered intensely, for, besides being badly hurt, he had been so terrified, that for hours afterward he would scream in the most agonizing manner, and beg to have the monster taken away from him.

It was impossible to calm him, and this greatly lessened his chances of getting better, a high fever, with delirium attending

it, setting in before morning, when his sleep should have been soundest.

He died in great agony within twenty-four hours, and many expressed the opinion that the brute was mad and that the poor lad had been a victim to hydrophobia.

It was learned, about that time, that Dugald had also been bitten by the tiger.

His wound was in the right arm and had been given during the desperate struggle with the beast, before the latter had been conquered.

He had not known it at the time, so great was his excitement, and he did not discover it until he was going to bed.

He dressed the wound in a rude sort of fashion, and in the morning it was attended to by the surgeon.

There seemed to be no danger that he would die from the bite, but a strangeness was noticed about him late that afternoon which momentarily increased.

The man was mad!

The tiger's bite had made him insane, turned him into a regular demon.

His eyes lost their human look and glared at one like the eyes of the huge tiger himself.

He muttered incoherently to himself, and twitched his fingers in a nervous manner, as if anxious to clutch someone by the throat.

He would pace up and down the room in the restless manner observed in wild beasts, and when spoken to would answer, not in words, but with a savage growl.

The man was mad beyond question, but whether his madness was produced by the bite of the tiger could not be determined. The animal itself showed no signs of the malady, although as fierce as ever, and Dugald's state could not be accounted for.

The crisis was reached that night.

At a late hour he made his way into the room of one of his friends, creeping on all fours, and attacked the man in his bed.

He bit and tore at his throat, all the time uttering the most unearthly yells, and digging his long fingers into his victim's eyes.

By the time the maniac was removed the man was dead.

"I am Tiger-Heart," muttered Dugald, as he stood in the center of the room, bound and manacled, "Tiger-Heart, the fiend!"

His eyes were those of a fiend, certainly, and emitted a light that had surely never before shone from human eyes.

He raved and stormed and called himself Tiger-Heart for more than an hour, but all this time his symptoms were only those of insanity, and never of hydrophobia.

He was pronounced insane, and removed to the nearest asylum, where his strange madness increased every hour, making it necessary to put him in a straight-jacket.

Before this had been accomplished he killed one of the keepers.

"I am Tiger-Heart!" he yelled, and springing upon the man nearest him, he seized the fellow's head between his powerful hands.

There was no time to spare, if they valued their lives, and the keepers summoned all their strength for the task.

At last he was powerless to harm either them or himself.

If glances could kill, every man in the establishment would have been dead a thousand times, for never in all the world was there a look of such devilish rage.

The famed basilisk, even, could hardly have given such deadly glances, and the men kept away from the madman as much as possible.

There never had been known such a desperate case of insanity within the experience of a dozen physicians, and the hydrophobia theory was abandoned.

The man was insane from the bite of a tiger!

That was all that could be said about it.

For weeks none but the bravest keepers dared approach him, and never alone, for it would have been their death to have attempted such a thing.

He was called Tiger-Heart and nothing else, and scarcely ever spoke a word, glaring upon the passers by with those terrible eyes.

He threw off his clothes, and girded his loins with a mass of rags torn from his coat, wore no shoes, and looked more like a madman than ever.

His long hair and beard increased in length, and being entirely untrimmed and uncombed, made him look like some fabled wild man of the woods.

One day, summoning all his powers, he actually wrenched one of the solid iron bars guarding his window, from its fastenings.

With this he contrived to pry out a second one, and the opening being large enough, he forced his body through, and dropped down into the corridor.

Armed with the heavy iron bar, which he carried on his shoulder, he strode along toward the outer doors, shouting in a loud voice:

"I am Tiger-Heart, the demon!"

One of the keepers chanced to catch sight of him, and ran to give the alarm.

Dugald saw the man, and leaped upon him in a second, bringing the bar down with all his force upon the fellow's skull.

Leaving the man lying dead on the stone floor, Tiger-Heart strode onward.

The alarm had been given, although the poor keeper was dead; and behind a hastily-erected barricade at the further end of the wall were three or four of the keepers armed with revolvers and rifles.

It was deemed best to capture the man alive if possible, but his conduct rendered this impossible.

With a roar like that of a wild best, he leaped clear over the barricade, and struck right and left with the bar of iron.

There was but one thing to be done.

The madman must be killed!

The head keeper raised his arm and fired, the ball striking the maniac in the forehead, and bringing him to the floor.

Even as he fell in death he clutched one of the keepers by the throat, and closed his fingers in a grasp that was not easily loosened even after the maniac was dead.

In this manner, shot down like the wild beast from which he inherited his madness, perished one of the most terrible maniacs that had ever been seen or heard of, and his case still excites wonder and defies either explanation or classification.

At any rate, the man was dead, and everyone breathed freely after he was gone, his presence in the asylum having been a cause of perpetual anxiety.

Mr. Seabury and his wife were on the point of moving to another flat. Both of them were anxious that the transfer should be made at the least possible expense, and the nearness of the new home promised materially to further this aim. "I can carry loads of little things over in my brown bag," announced Mrs. Seabury. "And you can take books and so on in your big satchel." In discussing further the matter of transportation Mrs. Seabury remarked that, notwithstanding the heat, she could wear her winter coat over, leave it, and return for her spring coat. The idea charmed her impractical husband. "Why, I can do the same thing!" he said. "I'll wear over one suit and then come back for another!"

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